

PZ
3

.V6675

FT MEADE
GenColl

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. 35 Copyright No. P23
Shelf V61075

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



THE
Seaside Library
Pocket Edition.

VIDA'S STORY.

A NOVEL.

•17 TO 27 VANDEWATER ST
NEW YORK.

George Munro

PUBLISHER

T H E

NEW YORK FIRESIDE COMPANION.

Essentially a Paper for the Home Circle.

PURE, BRIGHT AND INTERESTING.

THE FIRESIDE COMPANION numbers among its contributors the best of living fiction writers.

Its Detective Stories are the most absorbing ever published, and its specialties are features peculiar to this journal.

A Fashion Article, embracing the newest modes, prices, etc., by a noted modiste, is printed in every number.

The Answers to Correspondents contain reliable information on every conceivable subject.

TERMS:—THE NEW YORK FIRESIDE COMPANION will be sent for one year, on receipt of \$3: two copies for \$5. Getters-up of clubs can afterward add single copies at \$2.50 each. We will be responsible for remittances sent in Registered Letters or by Post-office Money Orders. Postage free. Specimen copies sent free.

GEORGE MUNRO, Publisher,

P. O. Box 3751.

17 to 27 Vandewater Street, New York.

VIDA'S STORY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“GUILTY WITHOUT CRIME.”



NEW YORK
GEORGE MUNRO, PUBLISHER,
17 TO 27 VANDEWATER STREET.

VIDA'S STORY.

CHAPTER I.

"WANTED—A private secretary; must be well educated, write a clear hand, and be able to correspond in French. Knowledge of short-hand desirable. Address, in own handwriting, B. L. D., Athenæum Club, Pall Mall, S. W."

All of these requirements I could fulfill, but there was one difficulty I could not surmount. I was a woman, and the advertiser, of course, required a man. Yet I might try my luck; why not? At worst I could but fail, and I should like a secretaryship very much if I could get it.

I do not think there were many girls gently born and well educated so absolutely friendless as Nellie and I. We never seemed to have had any friends, and the only relation we had any knowledge of was an old aunt, whom we never saw, but who used to write to papa occasionally from an outlandish place in County Wicklow. Certainly our position, as far back as even Nellie, who was two years my senior, could remember, was not one to foster friendship, for we were always poor, and continually moving about—not in our own country, but in France and Belgium principally.

Papa was a younger son of an old Irish family, rich only in descent and tradition, and he had inherited to the full the shiftless habits as well as the genial qualities proverbially belonging to the children of Erin. Fortunately for us he married an Englishwoman, who bequeathed to Nellie and me some of her sound common sense and stability of character, or we might have drifted through life as poor papa did. He went to Brussels shortly after his marriage—he lived by literature then, and made a very fair income, but why he went abroad instead of to London, goodness only knows. Nellie was born in a pretty room *au deuxième*—it ought to have been *au troisième*—but who could imagine Verner Verona living within his means? My parents had removed to Bruges shortly before I was born, and when I was only five years old mamma died. We were living in Paris then—*au quatrième*, alas, and *outre Seine*, for we were very poor in those days!

There was nothing of the Spaniard about papa, he was altogether Irish; and his original ancestor might have been Dennis O'Something instead of the stately Castilian grandee with a dozen Christian names who went ashore on the Wicklow coast with the "Santa Maria Magdalena," the finest ship, we were always told, of the Invincible Armada. Perseverance and steady application were

qualities our happy-go-lucky father did not possess; he never could be punctual in sending in his "copy," consequently editors soon grew tired of him, and his writings—brilliant though they were—were not so much in request as heretofore. He bewailed his fate, and anathematized his destiny; but he would never admit that the fault lay with himself. Meanwhile we grew poorer and poorer, and, whilst we went higher and higher in the matter of *étage*, we went lower and lower in the matter of locality.

Nellie and I went to half a dozen different schools on "reciprocal terms," and, as we both had plenty of application, we managed to pick up a good education. We were happy too in those shiftless knock-about days. We were thoroughly Irish in temperament, and always would look upon the bright and ludicrous side of things. How we used to laugh at our shabby frocks and our patched boots and gloves—which were mended till they were more thread than glove! What jokes we made over our frequently scanty repasts, and how we used to improvise songs of triumph over the rare advent of a new gown! At one time we had only one good hat, which we shared between us; we should doubtless have done the same with dresses, only I was half a head taller and a good deal slighter in figure than Nellie.

We were supposed to qualify for governesses, and Nellie really did do so; so did I—that is, I learned all that she learned; but I could not change my temperament, which was quite antagonistic to teaching. Nellie liked it, I hated it; she was staid and solemn, I was always a madcap. Nellie often said I ought to have been born a boy, and many times I wished that I had. Literature was my passion. I wrote stories in French and English as soon as I could write at all, and when I had reached the mature age of twelve I indited an historical romance, which Nellie, aged fourteen, pronounced quite good enough to publish.

At the age of eighteen Nellie obtained a situation as governess, and very miserable I was without her. But I scribbled away more than ever, and one day was delighted by a letter from the editor of a London periodical accepting a short story I had sent. Dear me, what a lot I did with the small sum remitted to me—for I laid it out myself, experience having taught me that money in papa's hands was simply frittered away!

Two years later papa suddenly determined to go to London. And to London we came, taking up our abode in Notting Hill. Nellie was then in a situation in England as French governess, and I began to look out for similar employment, for I had not found literature a profitable occupation. I could not get another story accepted, though I sent out bundles of manuscript. But it seemed that I was destined not to be more successful with teaching. I went to two agents—I could not afford to advertise—and they entered my name and qualifications in a book, and both promised to "do their best." Then I went to the institution in Harley Street; but I might have spared myself that trouble. My religion, for one thing, was dead against me, for almost everybody wanted a Protestant governess; and, if by chance that difficulty was overcome, there was some other that was equally insurmountable. I waited once for two hours to see a lady who required a "young Catholic foreign governess," and

when at last I was admitted to her presence—twenty applicants having preceded me—she said I was too young.

"I am eighteen," I told her.

"Yes; but"—looking at me dubiously—"you are too young, I fear."

"I was afraid she would not engage you," said Mrs. Merton, the agent, when I returned to her.

"Why, don't I look respectable enough?" I asked jocularly.

Mrs. Merton smiled kindly; she was a nice woman.

"It isn't that," she answered. "You have not the air of a governess, and some people"—here she smiled again—"don't like good-looking governesses."

Now I may truly say that that remark surprised me. I could not have had much vanity, or I should have been better prepared for it. Nellie and papa used to make a great fuss about my appearance, but I always attributed it to the propensity relations have for discovering merits that are invisible to others.

"But, if I am good-looking," I returned, "there are plenty of governesses similarly blessed or cursed."

She looked at me rather curiously, a smile lighting up her countenance.

"There is a lady at Clapham," she said, "whose address I can give you;" and she read out the particulars.

I went—spending money I could ill afford—to a pretentious house on Clapham Common, with a "lodge" almost touching the dining-room windows. The lady—whose husband was "something" in soap or tallow, I forget which—asked me a number of questions, and, at last, what was my religion.

"I am a Catholic," I replied.

She quite started.

"Dear me!" she exclaimed stiffly.—"How could Mrs. Merton have sent you? I told her I required a young person who belonged to the Congregational Church."

"Oh," I responded coolly, "there seems, then, to have been more than one mistake—I was told you wanted 'a young lady,' not a 'young person!' It is the nurse's place, I suppose, that is vacant?"

My Irish tongue would have its fling.

Poor Mis. Soap! How I shook with laughter, as I went away, at the memory of her amazed red face!

Ah, well, it seemed of no use trying! I wrote to Nellie quite despondingly, and she replied—

"You will never do for a governess. It is very good of you to try so hard; but, my dear, there are too many rocks in the way. Your religion is one, your youth another, yourself another. You don't look the part—not an atom; and you're vastly too pretty for some people, and out of the common—half Spanish, half Irish—utterly un-English—people do stare, dear. It can't be helped. You have to pay for not being ordinary."

Practically, I had to give up the idea of ever becoming a teacher of youth, and once more I struggled to gain a living by the pursuit of literature. Then I took up the study of short-hand, thinking that

I might get some reporting to do; and, as I practiced diligently, I became in time a proficient short-hand writer. Later on I did a little reporting for a local paper, and two or three of my stories were accepted; but all this was very precarious, and brought but little grist to the domestic mill. Then papa was taken dangerously ill, and when he died—he was only ill for a month—there was, needless to say, nothing left—not even enough to pay for the funeral.

Nellie about this time lost her situation, as her pupils were being sent to school; but the lady recommended her to a friend living in Bedford Square, who required a daily governess. She would pay fifty pounds per annum, and Nellie was to dine with her pupils.

"So we shall do finely," Nellie said enthusiastically. "And you will get on in time, Vida. *Nil desperandum!*"

So we took a top bed-and-sitting-room in Bloomsbury, and I wrote and wrote, and answered advertisements for secretaries—for almost anything—I would have gone as a shop-assistant could I have obtained such a situation; but all I could do did not bring in another fifty pounds a year; and I was getting on for twenty-five and not making my own living entirely yet.

And then one day I saw that advertisement for a private secretary in the "*Athenæum*."



CHAPTER II.

IT was a dull wet day, toward the end of June, and I had just been putting things *en train* for tea, ready for Nellie's return, when the landlady's servant brought up the "*Athenæum*," and I sat down and considered whether I should risk a penny in answering that advertisement, for pennies were too valuable to be recklessly thrown away. The room looked homelike, although the furniture was somewhat shabby, and the wall-paper not of the cleanest. The chairs—thank goodness!—were covered with red—very old and faded—and not the odious green so much affected in English lodging-houses. The center-table was at its best, crowned with the tea-equipage; and, though the teapot was only brown delf, all was bright and clean. In one window—our room had two—was a table devoted to my writing, and consequently presenting a somewhat disorderly appearance. There were flowers on the mantel-piece and on the tea-table—cheap flowers bought in the street; and the fireplace was filled with ferns and feathery grass which the greengrocer had given to me.

I had just put down the "*Athenæum*" to make the tea when I heard Nellie's light step on the stairs, and the next minute the door opened and she came in.

"Well, you dear old Vida," she began, as I ran up and kissed her, "how has the world been wagging with you?"

"Much as usual, Nellie. What have you there?" I asked, as she laid a small paper-bag down upon the table.

"A couple of eggs for your tea, ma'am. You had nothing but bread-and-cheese for dinner to-day."

"Nellie," I cried, "you should not! You know very well that

bread-and-cheese is quite enough for me. I don't want anything more."

"Don't you? Well, I dare say the eggs won't do you any harm. Ring the bell, there's a good girl, and don't look at me so reproachfully with those great gray eyes."

They were full of tears just then; but what could I do but kiss Nellie again, though I tried to scold her for such extravagance.

Nellie was about the medium height, slight, and with a very good figure. Her hair and eyes were brown, the expression of her face very sweet and thoughtful. She was not exactly pretty, and yet it would have been difficult to call her anything else, and to me her face had always a charm which was a thousand times better than prettiness, or even beauty. I did not object to being handsome, of course, but I would have given up my curly hair and "creamy" complexion and sweeping lashes and "great gray eyes;" and all the rest that Nellie took so much pride in, for Nellie's goodness.

"There is an advertisement in the 'Athenæum' to-day that I mean to answer," I said, when we were fairly seated at tea.

"What is it for?"

For answer I placed the paper before her, and pointed out the advertisement.

"My dear Vida," exclaimed Nellie, "they are sure to want a man!"

"Almost sure—not quite! And I could do all that a man could do—more even than is actually required, for the advertisement says, 'short-hand desirable,' and I know it thoroughly."

"Of course there is no harm in trying," Nellie said, somewhat dubiously; "but suppose it is to be a resident secretary in the house of a single man?"

"Well," I replied defiantly, "it all depends on circumstances. He might be an old and feeble bachelor; and I tell you, Nellie, I am ready to do pretty well anything so long as it is respectable in itself. We know no one whose good or bad opinion can affect us in the remotest degree. We haven't a friend; there isn't a single creature who cares whether we live or die—even Mrs. Miller down below wouldn't care unless we left some rent unpaid."

"But you can't be quite indifferent to the opinion of the world, Vida."

"Not when the world has done so little for us? I can't go on half living on you, Nellie, just out of fear of Mrs. Grundy."

"Vida!" The tone was full of reproach. I stretched out my hand and clasped hers.

"Nellie," I said, feeling half choked, "I know you would willingly starve yourself for me; but it breaks my heart that I can't do my fair share of the work. If you were earning three times the money, it wouldn't be so hard; but what you have is not a penny too much to keep yourself upon. You know that if you were in my place you would feel as I do."

"Perhaps I should; but that would not make things any the better."

"But it takes the wind out of your sails," I answered, laughing now. "However it can do no harm to write and see what sort of an answer—if any—I shall get."

I wrote my letter that evening, only signing myself, "V. T. Verona"—my second name was Teresa—and I knew that neither my handwriting nor the style of the epistle would betray my sex. I posted the letter before I went to bed, so that it should reach its destination early in the morning; it is always best to be prompt in matters of business, but I certainly did not expect to get an answer to this. Experience had not tended to develop in me a very hopeful disposition.

"Good luck to you," said Nellie, when she left to go to her pupils, and I laughed and shrugged my shoulders.

That morning I took a MS. down to the city, and then purchased a few necessaries—luxuries I could never indulge in—and it was nearly one o'clock—my dinner time—when I returned home.

On the table lay a large square envelope, addressed in a bold hand full of character to, "V. T. Verona, Esq." I took up the envelope and turned it round. There was a crest upon it—a cross and a sword crossed, and underneath the motto *Sans peur et sans reproche*. But crests do not stand for much in these days; anybody can assume one. I opened the letter and read the following—

"DEAR SIR,—Will you kindly call on me this evening between five and six, or to-morrow morning at eleven, at Morley's Hotel, Trafalgar Square.

"Yours, etc.,

"BERTRAM L. DARRELL."

I sat down, and indulged in a hearty laugh.

"What a joke!" I said to myself. "How the man will stare when he sees a lady! I shall certainly call, though I have no chance of getting the berth." And then I sighed. "Oh, dear, why wasn't I born a man?"

Of course I would go that afternoon, and presently I set about putting on my best attire—for I am a devout believer in the principle of dressing as well as means will permit. We were, properly speaking, "out of mourning" now, but, as our best dresses were still good, we continued in mourning; in fact, we could not afford to go out of it. I looked quite "sweat," I flattered myself, in my crape-trimmed gown, closely fitting cashmere jacket, and cavalier-shaped black hat; but did I look respectable enough? I surveyed myself in the glass with a new emotion. My hair—which was chestnut in hue—"golden chestnut," Nellie called it—was worn in short curls all over my head, and clustered over my forehead; and with that rakish-looking hat, together with my general appearance, I felt that somehow I did not look much like a secretary; but, as I really did not regard the expedition in a serious light, it did not much matter what I looked like. So I set off to walk to Trafalgar Square without any more misgivings.

Of course I conjectured, *en route*, what sort of man Mr. Darrell would be—old and grumpy, no doubt, and perhaps a little blind. Was he a literary man, or a "gentleman unattached"? Not an M. P., or he would have stipulated for classical acquirements in his secretary; besides, the hotel seemed to indicate that he did not habitually live in London. If he were old, there would be a chance for me, though he might think me too young.

Conjecture however was cut short by my arrival at Morley's Hotel, and I boldly mounted the steps. I walked up to a waiter whom I saw crossing the hall, and who paused with a polite bow at my approach.

"Can I see Mr. Darrell?" I asked. "I have come by appointment—Miss Verona."

"Very well, madam. John"—to another waiter standing near—"show this lady up to Mr. Darrell's room—20."

I followed John up a broad staircase, and across a wide landing, when he paused and knocked at a door. A deep voice—not an old voice—responded "Come in," and John opened the door, saying—"A lady, sir, wishes to see you—Miss Verona."

"Miss Verona!" I heard the voice repeat in a tone of surprise; then immediately—"Show her in, please."

The waiter opened the door wider, bowed me in, placed a chair for me, and departed.

I found myself in a large, handsomely-furnished drawing-room, with lace-curtained windows looking out upon the square; and as I went forward a gentleman rose from a writing-table near one of the windows, and bowed to me. My heart sunk; my vision of a withered old man fled, and with it the vague hope that I had unconsciously nursed on my way down.

This gentleman was not young, but he was certainly not more than forty, tall, of slight build, and decidedly handsome—grave, rather stern-looking, perhaps; but, of course, I could not observe details as yet, and just now he was smiling a little.

"There seems," he began—and I liked the tone of his voice, it was full and soft—"to have been a mistake. I took my correspondent to be a man; the writing was quite masculine, and the letter so business-like—that—pardon me—the mistake was not unnatural, was it?"

While he spoke I felt that a pair of very brilliant dark eyes—I could not determine their color, for the speaker's face was partially in shadow—were covertly "taking stock" of me. The chair had been placed facing the window, so that my countenance was in full light as I sat opposite to Mr. Darrell. I replied to him half-laughingly.

"I should take the mistake rather as a compliment than otherwise; strangers often make it. I suppose I ought not to have written; but I thought there would be no harm in venturing."

"Certainly not;" he had resumed his seat, and was playing with a pen in a thoughtful way. "Of course when I advertised I was only thinking of a man. I have had already more than fifty answers, but yours is the only one I have replied to as yet. I am so sorry—I wish—" He paused, and bit his lip. I rose as if about to leave.

"I only came on the chance," I stammered out; but, before I could get any further, Mr. Darrell lifted his eyes quickly, and motioned to me to resume my seat.

"Wait a little," he said; "I don't know—" He took up a letter that lay before him—it was mine, I could see—and glanced down it again. "You possess all the qualifications I require," he remarked, "and even more; one seldom meets with a lady who has

thoroughly mastered short-hand. Have you ever done secretary's work before? You say 'accustomed to correspondence.'"

"I have had a great deal of business correspondence, and I wrote all my father's business letters for some years both in French and English."

"Yes? And could you, if you were given, say, a column of matter, summarize the substance of it in a paragraph?"

"Yes. I have done a great deal of that kind of work for a newspaper I write for."

He looked amused and a little puzzled. I think he found me a new experience.

"How did you find time," he asked, "to acquire so much knowledge?"

"I have had plenty of time; I am twenty-five," I replied.

"I should not have thought you more than twenty at the outside."

"I suppose," I responded, with a smile, "you think I have put five years on to my age?"

It was a rather bold speech, though I did not make it in the least pertly; but Mr. Darrell bit his lip again.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "I believe your statement, Miss Verona, and apologize to you for my rudeness in doubting it. By the way, you are not English, are you?"

"My father was an Irishman of Spanish descent—my mother English."

"Thank you. Your father, then, is—" He stopped, glancing up at my deep mourning.

"My father died eighteen months ago," I said. "I am lodging with my sister."

"Does she do the same kind of work that you do?"

"No; she is a daily governess."

It was rather odd, perhaps, that he should ask me all these questions when I was evidently ineligible, and yet it never occurred to me somehow to be offended. I liked his face, his manner, the tone of his voice; he seemed interested, not merely curious. I felt, in a way, "at home" with him as one rarely can feel with a stranger. He looked, too, as if he had suffered a great deal, and a woman's sympathies are generally enlisted for suffering. He scanned me again after my last reply; then he turned his eyes away, and took up the pen once more, looking thoughtful and perplexed. I hardly knew whether to rise and terminate the interview, or wait a minute or two. Mr. Darrell decided the question by speaking.

"I scarcely know," he began, with some hesitation, "what to say. If it could have been arranged"—He frowned, stopped, then smiled a little again, and went on, glancing at me now and then as he spoke—"The truth is, Miss Verona, that, were it not for circumstances which I am afraid will make any arrangement impossible, I should have liked very much to enlist your services. You are quite as capable as any man of doing what I require; you are a thorough woman of business, and I am sure you and I would get on very well together; but, you see, it is a resident secretary that I want, and I—I have no wife."

I suppose that at this juncture I ought to have blushed, and felt

very much embarrassed, or have risen and politely, but somewhat stiffly, bidden adieu to my would-be-if-he-could employer. But I am afraid I am not a very properly-behaved young woman, for I did not color, although I did feel embarrassed. My heart beat fast, but with emotions by no means befitting the circumstances. What could I do? What could I say? Here was the very prize for which I had been longing almost within my grasp, and I could not close my fingers upon it. I had fully the courage of my opinions, and was quite prepared to consider the advisability of throwing over that vague entity "the world," whose opinion was of so little moment to me personally.

Mr. Darrell had inspired me with that instinctive feeling of trust which took from me all fear on his account. I knew more of the world than most young women of my age, and I was not disposed to place much faith in human nature; yet it did not for a moment occur to me to doubt Mr. Darrell's perfect honesty in wishing to engage me. I simply saw a business transaction defeated by *convenances* which left me to starve on my good name.

If he would only give me an opening I could speak; but I could not take the initiative, he might misunderstand me; at the least he would think perhaps that I was quite reckless of appearances, and he had not the cue to my indifference. He did not know how poor I was, and how friendless; he did not know that I was often obliged to bear the bitter pain of sharing my sister's hard-won earnings. It was hard, very hard, to see this situation slipping from my grasp; but there was no help for it. I rose to take my departure. I ought to have said something, but no words would come. Mr. Darrell looked at me with an odd, almost wistful look, I thought.

"You are going?" he asked, as if he spoke to gain time.

"I need not detain you—if the matter is settled."

"I don't know. Can you spare me a few minutes longer?"

"If you wish it!"—and I sat down again.

"The world is a bugbear," he began, "but we can not always be independent of it. If this matter rested only with you and me, Miss Verona—"

"It does, so far as I am concerned," I interposed courageously.

He looked surprised, but his brow certainly cleared.

"You have relations and friends who—"

I shook my head.

"I have no one in the world but my sister. There is not a creature who cares what I do or what becomes of me, or whose opinion is of the remotest consequence to me."

It would not have been a very prudent speech to make to some men; but I had complete faith and trust in Mr. Darrell.

"Then," he responded, "I will speak plainly, and I am sure you will not be offended, but will be better pleased at straightforwardness. I am not often in London; I live alone in the country, in a lonely part of Marlshire. I lead a very solitary life. Few people come to visit me, and I don't care for society; the servants have all been in the family for years, as the parents were before them. The life would be, for a young girl, dull, I am afraid. The country is very beautiful, and there are large grounds and a finely wooded park. You could ride, drive, walk; in the house there is plenty of

reading and a music-room well provided with musical instruments; and, if you are fond of dogs, there are plenty of them about. If you think you could be happy, and are not afraid of a world which really down there has scarcely an existence, I will engage you as my secretary, and give you references if you wish it. Perhaps you would prefer to speak to your sister first, and meanwhile make inquiries concerning me—that is, if you entertain my proposition at all."

He had put the matter before me in a business-like way that must have been to some extent reassuring, even to a person far more conventional than I was; and no doubt I shall seem to be greatly wanting in self-respect, and worse than foolishly regardless of public opinion, for not at once rejecting a proposition contravening the very A B C of the conventionalities. But for the life of me I could not see why I should throw over a present advantage for a purely problematical disadvantage. There was absolutely no one to call me to account for my actions. Nellie would not misjudge me, and Mr. Darrell clearly did not; it would be time enough to abandon my post if I found that the servants failed to treat me with due respect. It was an experiment, but one that appeared well worth the risking.

I paused scarcely a minute before I answered Mr. Darrell.

"I don't think there is any need to speak to my sister." In truth it was generally I who led and Nellie who followed. "I am quite willing to accept the situation, and I hope I shall give you satisfaction."

"I hope the satisfaction will be reciprocal, Miss Verona. Now for details. If you want to know who I am, the 'County Families' will tell you; for the rest—" He stopped, as I smiled and shook my head, seeing that he was about to write down something on a sheet of paper. "You don't care for references?" he asked.

"I have no right to ask for them since I have none to offer."

"That is very different. I will give you the names of two people who have known me for the best part of my life, and you can write to them or not, as you please."

"Yes, write to them I might; go to them I certainly should not. He wrote down two names and gave me the paper, then went on—

"I shall offer you eighty pounds a year, Miss Verona, and I shall generally require your services from ten o'clock to five; before and after those hours your time will be as absolutely your own as if you lived elsewhere and came to my house as to an office. If I chanced to want anything done for me in your time, I should treat it entirely as a matter of business."

Eighty pounds per annum! I had expected fifty pounds, or perhaps sixty pounds. I was on the point of saying that I should be pleased to do any extra work without regarding it as "business," but wisdom came to my rescue in time to check the words. The position was undoubtedly one in which it was best to preserve business relations; besides, I rapidly reflected that, although I had formed a favorable opinion of Mr. Darrell, I really knew nothing of him, and he might prove an exacting employer, after all. So I simply thanked him and asked him when he wished me to commence my duties, wondering at the same time how I was going to

obtain the necessary "fit-out" and pay the fare, for I possessed just then one sovereign, and Nellie could not help me for another fortnight, when her quarter's salary would be paid.

"Would this day week suit you?" asked Mr. Darrell. "If not, pray say so."

"This day week would suit me, thank you."

"You are quite sure?"

"Quite sure."

"Very well then. My place—Langton Chase—is six miles from the nearest station, and there are not many trains in the course of the day. I will send up a list to you, and, if you will let me know which train you select, it shall be met."

While he spoke he had been writing something—I had not noticed what, for I was looking on the ground listening to what he said, and still revolving in my mind the difficult question how to procure what I should need for my new position. He now held toward me an envelope, adding, with the kindest smile I ever saw on man's or woman's face—

"I hope you will allow me to make a small advance—I thought you might find it convenient, perhaps."

I felt the blood rush to my face and the tears to my eyes as I took the envelope from him. Kindness of this sort, so rare, so unlooked for, always touches me to the quick, and, strive as I would, I could not keep my voice steady as I said—

"Thank you very much, Mr. Darrell; it is very kind of you."

"No thanks, please." I had risen; he rose too, and held out his hand. "In a week, then," he added, "I shall have the pleasure of seeing you at Langton Chase. I hope you will not find existence there unbearably dull. Have you ever lived in the country?"

"Never for long together."

I did not think he had either. There was nothing of the countryman about him; I should have imagined, on the contrary, that he had traveled a great deal.

"Nor have I," he assured me, "until the last two years; and sometimes I think I shall have to go abroad again. However, I trust you will be able to endure country life—it will be a new experience. Good-bye."

He opened the door for me, and I passed out, half smiling to myself at the idea of throwing up eighty pounds a year because I had to live in the country to earn it. The check I put into my purse, saying to myself again that it was exceedingly kind of Mr. Darrell to think of it. I wondered if he had any idea of the real boon it was to me. Eminently satisfied as I was with the result of my interview, I confess my heart beat a little apprehensively as I drew near home. Nellie would not altogether like it, I knew; but there was no drawing back now, and, if there had been, I should not have done so.

CHAPTER III.

IT was a quarter to six when I reached our lodging. Nellie, who was sitting near the window with some needlework in her hand, sprung up and ran to kiss me.

"At last, Miss Truant!" she cried. "What have you been about?"

"You have not waited tea for me, have you?" I asked, glancing at the table and noticing that nothing had been touched.

"Of course I have. Now whip off your things, and we'll have tea in no time. I am dying for your news."

Saying this she lighted the little methylated spirit stove and placed the kettle on it. Meanwhile, I quickly drew out the check Mr. Darrell had given me, and, when Nellie raised her head, there was I standing before her laughing, with the check spread out on my hand.

"Why, Vida," she exclaimed, "what on earth is it? What does it mean?"

"Have you never seen a check, my dear? Can't you see that this is an order to Messrs. Coutts to pay to me the sum of ten pounds, signed, 'Bertram Louis Darrell'?"

Nellie caught me by the shoulder.

"Look here, Vida; you don't have any tea until you have told me what you have been about! Has Mr. Darrell engaged you?"

"If he had not he would hardly have advanced me part of my salary."

"How awfully good of him!" cried Nellie. "Now, Vida, quick—I'm dying to know all!"

"I'll begin at the best," I said, taking off my hat and seating myself on the edge of the bed. "I am to have eighty pounds, and work from ten till five."

"Vida, you're joking!"

"I am not, indeed."

Nellie clasped her hands.

"Oh, Vida, it doesn't seem possible such good luck could come to us!"

"Don't be too ecstatic," I said, laughing; but there were tears in my eyes. "I shall have to live away from you—in the country—"

"A resident secretary!" Nellie's countenance fell. "But it can't be helped," she added bravely; "we could not expect to be always together."

"It isn't only that, Nellie, though that is all I care about. Do you remember what I said when I was going to answer the advertisement?"

"About—" Nellie drew back a step and looked at me apprehensively.

"About my not troubling the *convenances* if they should come in the way," I explained. "I never thought that my words would prove prophetic. Mr. Darrell is, I should say, forty; he is not mar-

ried, and lives alone." Nellie stood looking at me blankly. "Langton Chase," I went on—"that is the name of his house—is in a lonely part of Marlshire. He rarely sees people, and the servants are all old retainers."

"And what sort of a man is Mr. Darrell himself?" Nellie asked, with rather ominous quietness.

"The sort of man," I answered, "whom you would trust instinctively in any circumstances. He is good-looking—handsome I should call him—and I think he has had a great deal of trouble. He is a perfect gentleman—one could tell at once he is a man of good birth. I am sure you would like him if you saw him. He makes me feel young and insignificant, and yet quite at home with him. Now your kettle is boiling over."

Nellie's brow had relaxed somewhat while I spoke. She turned now, and, lifting the kettle, made the tea; this done, she observed slowly—

"So far, so good, Vida. You're not easily deceived in people; you are a far better judge of character than I am. But, say what you will, it is an upsetting of all accepted rules for a young woman to live in the same house with a single man who is not even old."

"I never said it was not, sister mine; all I maintain is that, in my somewhat unique position, the said rules don't concern me enough to exact a very rigid obedience. After all, I am only going a step beyond what is done every day. Don't young lady-housekeepers take charge of widowers' households? And, even if the children are young, there is no *prima facie* cause for scandal. Mr. Darrell lives 'far from the madding crowd,' he does not receive guests; I shall not have to face people who know me. Who is there, then, to talk—except the servants? If they do, I shall soon find it out, and then, I allow, I should probably have to leave. But I can't afford, Nellie, to be frightened with may-be's and might-be's. I don't see the sense of truckling to a world that has done one no good and can do one no harm."

"If you were seeking other work, Vida, you could not refer to Mr. Darrell?"

"That would depend. A secretary or an editor is not like a governess; I should be asked for business experience, not for a certificate of morality, and my prospective employer would certainly not ask whether Mr. Darrell were married or single, twenty-five or seventy. In any case I should have the solid advantages of my position while it endured, and if I earned no reference I should, in one sense, be no worse off than I am now; in another, I should have added experience and more money."

Nellie's brow cleared as I proceeded with my arguments; she was growing, I could see, more reconciled to the position, if she did not see it in quite the same light in which I did; but she looked at me in a manner that puzzled me. I could not understand it then; later, I did.

"You are an odd girl, Vida!" she said. "I suppose there is a good deal of truth in what you say, but I doubt if the arrangement will answer altogether."

"Time will prove. But what do you mean?" I asked, for there was something underlying her words.

"Oh, never mind; you wouldn't believe me if I told you! Come to tea now, and tell me more details."

This I did; and, when I had finished, Nellie remarked—

"He must be a strange sort of man as you are a strange girl, Vida. Will you write to the references?"

"No. A man would not refer you to people who would speak against him, and I can judge for myself."

Again Nellie looked at me in that curious manner, but, when I asked her what she meant, she only laughed and shook her head.

The next day was a half-holiday. Nellie's pupils were going to some exhibition, so she and I went out to make our purchases, and had a very merry afternoon, despite our approaching separation.

"By the way," I remarked, as we turned homeward for tea, provided with some dainties for that meal which I felt justified in procuring out of the abundance of my wealth, "Mr. Darrell said nothing about holidays; but I suppose I am to have some."

"Unless he contemplates taking you with him when he goes for his own," said Nellie, with mock gravity.

I laughed at this sally, but answered—

"I dare say he thought it premature to mention the matter. You see, the holiday season is so near now, and perhaps he is not going away."

"It is funny, Vida, for a man in his position to lead such a solitary life. He must have relations and friends."

I wish I could get hold of a 'County Families,' Nellie; Mr. Darrell said I should find his name there; but governesses and authors on 'half-time' don't generally possess such works as 'County Families.'

"Mrs. Miller has an old one—I saw it in her parlor the other day. We'll borrow it when we get in."

"Famous!" I exclaimed; and the request was preferred, and at once cheerfully complied with.

It was quite an historical volume, bearing date 1856, but it did just as well for my purpose as if it had been the latest issue. We carried it up to our apartment, and turned to "Darrell." Here it was—"Bertram Louis Clifford Darrell, born in 18—," and therefore, at the present date, forty-two. The family was a very old one, dating back to the thirteenth century, and the present owner of Langton Chase was the only son of an only son, his mother a Clifford, his paternal grandmother a Howard; there was no lack, then, directly and collaterally, of gentle blood. His clubs were the Carlton, Athenæum, and Travelers'."

"He seems to be badly off for immediate relatives," I remarked.

"And there is no town-house," added Nellie, not very relevantly.

"How strange for a man of good birth and position to remain unmarried until so late in life! If he dies without heirs, they will have to go back two generations for the heir."

"Some romance," I said. "Come, Nellie, we must have tea now."

And a very happy little feast it was. Good health and animal spirits are wonderful brighteners of poverty.

On the third day from this came a letter from Mr. Darrell, dated from Langton Chase, giving me the trains from London, and the

time of arrival at Durnford—that was the name of the station where I should have to alight. There were only three trains in the day, and I chose the middle one, which reached Durnford at five, so that I should get to the Chase in nice time for dinner. I did not know whether I was to dine with my employer, but I supposed so.

It was hard to part from Nellie; in all our troubles we had been together, and now she would be so lonely without me. Of course we were to write to each other constantly; but still letters are not the writers, and I am free to confess that while I was packing my things I shed a good many bitter tears, and when the actual parting came we both of us, as we admitted, "made fools of ourselves."

Nellie could not go with me to the station, so we had to say good-bye to each other in the morning when she left for her daily work; and I proceeded there alone.

I took a second-class ticket for Durnford. Had I been traveling independently I should have gone third; but I should be met, and it would not do for the servant to see me stepping out of a third-class carriage.

The day was splendid and much of the country through which I passed pretty, but my thoughts were not very happily occupied. I was leaving behind me the only one I loved; it might be months before I saw her again, and Langton Chase would be very dull without her.

In our London lodging, though I was alone all day, I had something to look forward to—Nellie's coming home, and that coming home cast a backward light over the whole day. But at Langton Chase, though I should be in a fine old house, and enjoy yet undreamed-of delights as regards books and music, I should have nothing to look forward to, and I should know that Nellie was even more dull than I. However, it was very foolish to go on in this way. People who have their living to get are not wise to indulge too much in introspection.

I rallied myself, therefore, and had succeeded in attaining a much brighter frame of mind by the time we were approaching Durnford. The country round about was really beautiful, wild and hilly, and richly wooded. Presently the train began to slacken speed, and I looked out of the window and saw that we were drawing near a small station behind which lay the village of Durnford, consisting, so far as I could see, of about two hundred houses picturesquely scattered up the slope of a wooded hill.

A bell rang, the guard called out "Durnford," and the train pulled up alongside of the primitive-looking platform.

As I stepped out of the carriage a middle-aged groom in claret-and-buff livery came up to me, touching his hat respectfully

"Miss Verona?" he said interrogatively.

"I am Miss Verona," I answered.

"What luggage, miss, please?"

I described my modest trunk—a new one, by the way—and in a minute or two a porter came along with it. We went out through the little booking-office, and there, without, in the road, stood a dog-cart, the horse held by a country lad. The porter eyed me rather curiously as he lifted the trunk into the back of the vehicle, but no interchange of courtesies passed between him and the groom, by

which I judged that the servants at the Chase, or at any rate some of them, were not very sociable. The groom assisted me up to my seat, took his beside me, and we drove off.

"Yonder is the Chase, miss," said the driver at last. "You can just see some of it above the trees."

I looked and saw some gray turrets peeping from among the trees that capped a hill-side about a mile ahead. The Chase, then, was evidently a mansion of considerable extent, and I was delighted to find that it stood on an eminence. Shortly after this we entered the park, and, as we drove along under arching trees, the deer started from among the bracken and gazed at us with soft shy eyes.

"What a delightful wild place!" I said to myself. "How I should enjoy a romp among the bracken with Nellie, or even with the dogs! But, dear me, I suppose I shall have to be grave and exceedingly proper now! Why should I, though, when I get out here by myself? No one will see me."

The pleasure-grounds were not as extensive as I should have imagined. Perhaps Mr. Darrell, like myself, preferred the wildness of the park to the more formal beauties of trim flower-beds and walks. We drove up to the house through a noble old archway which opened into a paved court with a fountain in the center, an unusual arrangement for an English house. Three broad steps led up to a deeply arched door, and, as the dog-cart stopped, Mr. Darrell himself appeared, accompanied by a huge Scotch deer-hound. In the background was a somewhat stately old dame, who, I presumed, was the housekeeper.

Mr. Darrel came down to the dog-cart and held out his hand to help me to alight, smiling the kindest of welcomes.

"I hope," he said, "you are not very tired with your journey, Miss Verona? It is a wearisome distance, isn't it?"

"The journey by train seems long," I answered; "but the drive from the station is delightful."

"I am glad you found it so! Mrs. Ellis will show you your rooms," he added, as we ascended the steps, "and will see that you have everything you require."

I could not help smiling.

"Indeed," I said, "I am not used to being waited upon."

"All the better; there is nothing like independence."

I confess that my heart beat a little faster as I looked at Mrs. Ellis, with the instinctive endeavor to discover by her countenance what she thought of me. I need have been under no apprehension. She had the dearest old face imaginable, framed by silvery hair, and her manner, as she asked me to follow her, was just what it would have been to an honored guest. She led me up a flight of oak stairs, with balusters carved in imitation of the branches of trees, and then along a wide corridor with windows of painted glass, and down a few steps and across a small vestibule. Finally she opened a door admitting to a good-sized sitting room, handsomely furnished; beyond this was a dressing-room, and beyond this again the sleeping apartment. I was pleased to notice that the windows of all three rooms faced the south. The view from these windows was lovely, commanding miles of most picturesque country. I could not restrain an exclamation of pleasure.

"It's the most beautiful view in the county you have from the Chase," observed Mrs. Ellis.

"And I," I said, "have just come from the sight of nothing more attractive than the houses across the street."

She smiled.

"I don't think I could bear that," she responded. "I have always been used to the country. Now, miss, is there anything I can do for you?"

"No, thank you, Mis. Ellis."

At this moment there was a knock at the outer door of the dressing-room, and a young house maid or parlor-maid entered, bearing tea on a salver, followed by a man-servant with my trunk.

"Dinner is at seven this evening, miss," said the housekeeper; "and, if you will please ring when you are ready, Lucy will show you the way to the drawing-room. You would never be able to find it yourself."

I thanked her, and, after giving a renewed assurance that I required no attendance, I was left alone.

The tea was delicious after my long journey, and I drank it gratefully.

"Then I am to dine with Mr. Darrell," I thought, while thus engaged—"for this evening, perhaps, not afterward. What exquisite tea!"

My toilet did not take me long. I had a black satin dress made in the antique style, for I reflected that I should require one gown that would do for a "dress," and I put this on, with lace ruffles at the throat and wrists. Thus arrayed I made a circuit *autour de ma chambre*, for which there was plenty of time before dinner. I thought these rooms luxurious, though I do not suppose they would have appeared to Mr. Darrell and his friends more than simply comfortable.

In the sitting room there were a writing-table and a well-stocked book-case; but I had only time to glance at a few of the books, and found some of my favorite authors, both in French and English. I returned to the dressing-room, and sunk into a seductive *fauveuil*, and, looking around with charmed eyes, I saw a silk curtain which seemed to veil a recess. I sprung up at once and drew it aside, and instantly started with a thrill of a new and deeper pleasure than any I had yet felt. Within was an oratory. Re-entering the dressing-room, I caught sight of my full-length figure in a tall cheval glass. It struck me that I looked in keeping with the surroundings, that I was altogether more seventeenth century than nineteenth in my appearance. I turned away and rang the bell, and in a minute or two Lucy came to the door. I saw her admiring glance at my dress, and I thought, "Perhaps she thinks it 'too much' for a secretary;" but, after all, black satin, even when made in picturesque fashion, is simple enough.

Lucy led the way to the drawing-room by a circuitous route which I should certainly never have discovered for myself; and at length entered an immense ante-chamber with a domed ceiling, and carving all round. At the further end was an arch, surmounted by a mass of carving, the Darrell crest forming the apex. Rich hangings of amber satin were looped back on the inner side of the arch,

and I beheld a limited view of fairyland—a vague but dazzling vision of harmonious colors; the air, too, was heavy with the scent of flowers. Oh, how delightful all this was—this luxury, this exquisite blending of all that is sumptuous in form and color with the associations of ages!

As I involuntarily paused, half under the shadow of the arch, a living form—not a man's—crossed the line of my vision and came toward me. With a start, I recollected myself; it was the stag-hound I had seen in the porch with Mr. Darrell. I walked forward and stooped to caress the animal, who waved his tail majestically, and looked up at me with kind faithful eyes. Lifting mine, I saw Mr. Darrell rise from a chair near one of the windows and advance to meet me.

"You are fond of dogs, I see," he said, leading me to a couch near where he had been sitting, and resuming his own seat.

"Very fond of them," I responded, holding out my hand to the deer-hound. "You have a great many dogs, haven't you?"

"Three, Miss Verona, and they are all favorites. You will see another of them presently—a large blood-hound; but he is ordinarily as gentle as a lamb."

"I am not afraid of blood-hounds. I have always thought it a popular prejudice that they are ill-tempered."

"I have never found them so; but dogs always make friends with me. I, like you, am fond of them, and they always know their friends. Look at Ian"—the dog was sitting by me, evidently enjoying my caresses—"he is generally of a suspicious disposition."

"Then I ought to feel very proud," I observed laughingly, fondling the great shaggy head.

At this moment the butler came to announce dinner, and we passed through some more passages to a room not large, but, like most of the rooms here, embellished with handsome oak carving. There were several fine paintings too on the walls, which, later on, I decided to inspect at my leisure.

"I generally dine in this room," Mr. Darrell said, as we took our places, "the large dining-room is too stately and gloomy. This is more home-like."

After dinner, and when the dessert was put upon the table, Mr. Darrell asked me if I liked my rooms.

"I thought," he said, "you would prefer a southern aspect; but, if not, it is easy to change them."

I know I looked surprised; I could not help it—it was treating me so entirely like a guest, to study my predilections as to the aspect of my windows.

"It was very kind of you," I replied, "to trouble about my rooms.

I have been rejoicing because they faced the south. They could not be nicer in any way."

"I am glad you are pleased; but if there is anything lacking, or anything you wish altered, if you will speak to Mrs. Ellis she will have it attended to at once. By the way, if you would like a letter posted to-night, one of the grooms can take it for you. We are civilized enough here, Miss Verona, to have a wall-box just outside the park gates, and there are two collections from it daily."

"How convenient! Thanks," I said; "I should like a letter posted."

I had been wondering how I could send a letter to Nellie. I did not like to ask that some one should be sent to the post; besides, for all I knew, there was no nearer post-office of any kind than Durnford—six miles away.

My next difficulty was a rather odd one. I was not sure whether I ought to withdraw or not at that point when the gentlemen are usually left to their wine; but I could hardly do this, as I was not a guest. But this difficulty, also, Mr. Darrell disposed of by proposing an adjournment to the drawing-room.

"My habits, you know, are not English," he remarked, smiling. "I have lived so much abroad, and I am almost as indifferent to wine as you are."

We went back to the drawing-room, where coffee was presently brought, and afterward Mr. Darrell showed me a beautifully carved davenport, where I could write my letter, and he called Ian, and stepped out on to the terrace, which ran the whole length of that side—the south side—of the house.

I had soon written my letter. I could not say a great deal that night; but promised to write at greater length on the morrow; and, when I had finished, I rose and walked softly about the room—for Mr. Darrell was still outside—admiring its rich and artistic appointments. A Broadwood grand I did not fail to take note of—I had seen that at the first glimpse I had of the room; then there were such charming pictures and statuary, such a profusion of flowers, curiously inlaid tables, so many rare and costly knickknacks—indeed, so much to admire that I could have spent some hours over this room alone. I was looking at a painting by Annibal Caracci, when Mr. Darrell entered the room again.

"Is the letter ready?" he asked.

"Yes, thank you," I replied, turning round; and he rang the bell.

"William"—to the servant who appeared—"take this letter, please"—indicating mine—"to the post. You will find several in the library. I shall give you," he added to me, when the servant had gone, "a number of letters to write for me to-morrow. By the way, at what time do you usually breakfast?"

"At eight o'clock."

"That is my time; but you need not breakfast until nine, if you prefer it. I shall not require you before ten."

"I should think nine very late for breakfast. I have always been used to early hours."

"Very well. And, if you like to breakfast with me in the breakfast-room, I shall be very pleased to have your company; but, if you would prefer to have it taken up to your room, pray do so. I wish you, Miss Verona"—with that sweet, kind smile I had seen before—"to do in your own time exactly what you prefer to do."

"You are very good, Mr. Darrell," I said, "to give me so much liberty, but for that very reason I could not enjoy it without consulting your wishes."

"I don't see in what I am good. I agreed with you for so much time, and the rest is your own. I am accustomed to lead a solitary life, you know."

What did he mean? Was this a hint that he would prefer to be alone? Would he think the better of me if I did not come down to-morrow morning, or did he only think that I would prefer to avoid as much as possible all purely social intercourse, and was only anxious to make me feel perfectly at ease in choosing my own course? I was perplexed. I did not want to intrude where I was not wanted; I did not wish him to think me intrusive; least of all did I want to hold aloof if he preferred to have my society. This last was the only consideration that really weighed with me. For the rest, I felt—though not so definitely as later, when I had time for reflection—that it would be best to commence as we should probably go on, otherwise things might seem to bear a significance when done a month hence that could not be forced upon them if done now, as a matter of course. If a position is at all difficult the only way to prevent *gêne* is to quietly and tacitly ignore the difficulty, so I replied, with scarcely a minute's hesitation—

"I would rather come down to the breakfast-room, please."

"If you please," he said. But I think—I am almost sure—he liked my reply.

That was a very pleasant evening to me, though I do not know whether Mr. Darrell found it so. He showed me a number of beautiful photographs which he had collected in his various travels abroad. He had been not only all over Europe, but to India and North and South America, and he talked in the most interesting manner when I questioned him. I am ashamed now to think of the number of questions I did ask, but the fact is he made me feel so completely at home with him that I forgot we were almost strangers, and that I was his secretary. I felt, indeed, more like a child sitting at the feet of one much older and wiser; I could never have treated Mr. Darrell otherwise than with reverence. I could have sat there listening to him till midnight; but a little after ten I made a move to retire, and he did not try to detain me. He shook hands with me and hoped I should have a good night's rest, and I departed. But, as I was not in the habit of retiring early, and was not in the least tired, I sat up and commenced a long letter to Nellie.

CHAPTER IV.

I AWOKE the next morning from a dream-haunted, but refreshing sleep. It was seven o'clock, and I arose and dressed, but, when my toilet was finished I reflected that I had no idea where the breakfast-room was.

"But I will try to find it out for myself," I said; and I started on my voyage of discovery.

It must be down-stairs somewhere, I knew, so I ran down the broad stairs I had ascended the evening before, and had just reached the hall below, where I stood, uncertain which of the four doors before me I should try, when the one nearest me opened, and Mr. Darrell appeared.

"Miss Verona," he said, holding out his hand, "how are you this morning? Are you in search of the breakfast-room?"

"Yes," I answered, laughing; "I thought I would try to find it myself."

"You are of an independent mind, I see." He smiled upon me indulgently, as if I were a child, whose tricks rather amused him. "'This is the breakfast-room"—opening a door opposite to that of the room from which he had just come. "I hope you slept well last night?"

"Yes, thank you."

The breakfast-room was a handsome old-fashioned apartment, with a window opening on to the terrace. I went toward the window and stepped into the warm sunshine without, while Mr. Darrell sat down in an arm-chair and took up a book. Two huge forms rose from the ground and came toward me, one with quick steps and wagging tail, the other more slowly. The first was Ian, the staghound; the other was an enormous blood-hound, that was evidently not disposed to make friends without due consideration. I patted Ian with my right hand, and stretched out my left to the blood-hound.

"Come, old fellow," I said, in a low coaxing tone. "I don't know your name, though—come!"

"His name is Hubert," said Mr. Darrell from within.

I started. I thought he was reading, I had no idea he could overhear me.

"Thanks," I replied. "You are a beauty, Hubert," I added, as the noble animal came up to me and rubbed his massive head against me. Then, with a hand on the head of each dog, I stood and reveled in the glorious view before me, all bathed in the morning sunshine.

When I re-entered the room Mr. Darrell had laid aside his book and was standing by the mantel-piece with his face turned toward the window, but I dare say he did not especially notice the view; he was too familiar with it. He rang the bell, remarking at the same time—

"I dare say it will take you some time to grow weary of those hills and woods."

"Are you weary of them?" I asked, impulsively.

"I?"—he shrugged his shoulders, and moved restlessly from his position. "I am weary of most things, my child."

There was in his tone such a blending of sadness, bitterness, and a kind of sorrowful tenderness for my youth, which must ere long leave me wearied, as he was, that I could not keep the tears from my eyes, and was obliged to stoop over Ian, under pretense of fondling him, until I could be mistress of myself again. But I could never forget the tone and manner with which these evidently involuntary words were spoken.

The servant just then entered with the breakfast, and a pile of letters, which he placed beside the plate at the foot of the table. I, then, was to do the honors.

I sat down, and Mr. Darrell proceeded to glance rapidly at the letters. Most of them he laid aside unopened; only one, indeed, after an "Excuse me," to me, did he open, and then that was placed with the others.

"Some work for you here, presently," he remarked, smiling.

When we had risen from the table, he said, as he was gathering his letters together—

"Will you come to me to the library, please, at half past nine, Miss Verona? Go through the doorway from which I came this morning, and cross the anteroom beyond to a great door set under an arch; that is the library."

"Thank you," I responded, and withdrew.

At the appointed time I repaired to the library. It was a noble apartment, very lofty, with a domed and painted ceiling, and book-cases on three sides filled from floor to ceiling with books. On one side the fire-place, with high carved-oak mantel-piece, interrupted the continuity of the bookshelves; opposite to this were the windows, deep set in embrasures, filled with painted glass, so that the light in the room was mellowed. Chairs and couches, which invited one to the luxury of lounging with a book, stood about, and in the center of the room was a large writing-table. Before this table, on which there were numerous papers and books, Mr. Darrell was seated, reading a letter. He looked up as I entered, and, drawing toward a chair near his own, he said—

"Will you sit down here, please, and I will show you what I want done this morning."

I confess my heart beat rather faster as I obeyed him, and I could not help feeling somewhat nervous. I evidently showed this feeling more than I thought, for Mr. Darrell said kindly—

"You must not be in the least nervous. I don't think you will find me exacting or severe, and I am quite sure you will prove a very able assistant. I shall leave you in many things to use your own discretion; and at first I will revise your work; then I shall be able to judge whether I have done wisely to trust you so much. You see, I am speaking quite plainly. But this is business. You will find pens and paper, in these drawers"—indicating them—"and here"—sweeping his hand over letters, newspapers, and other *materiel*—"is your morning's work—or part of it. You may not be able to get through it all. I shall prepare you presently some work for this afternoon. If you want to refer to me for anything, you will find me in my study. You saw a door to the right in the anteroom—it leads to a long passage; my study is at the end of that."

He rose, and resigned his place to me, adding, as he turned toward the door—

"We lunch at two. Leave off work when you hear the first bell."

He went out, and I settled myself to my first day's work at Langton Chase. It seemed by the way, as if I were to habitually join my employer at meals. I hoped this was so; it was far more pleasant for both parties; certainly for me.

I found the work prepared for me in the most methodical manner. I took a general survey of it before beginning the letters, of which there were fully a dozen, and I do not suppose this represented an average quantity. On three long slips of paper, fastened together, were such notes as these, in Mr. Darrell's clear, bold hand—"Find in Locke's 'Human Understanding' the passage commencing (so-and-so) and copy to the end of paragraph;" "Look out in the 'Reports of the Anthropological Society' for 18—the speech

of Mr. Meadows, and mark it." "Copy from Browning's 'Ivan Ivanowitch' (such-and-such a passage.)." "Copy from 'Romola,' page —, the passage commencing (so-and-so)." These were only specimens. I found references to books in all branches of literature, the names of which were unknown to me; some of them mediæval books, in English, German, Latin, French, and even Spanish. Metaphysics, physiology, ethnology, astronomy, poetry, music, the drama, fiction—any and every branch of literature was represented. What a store-house the man's mind must be! and what a memory he must have to remember where to find certain passages! In every case the book referred to had a number against it. This was to guide me in finding it, for I observed that the book-cases were divided into numbered compartments. Needless to say that only a portion, and that a small one, of this reference work was to be done to-day. Then there were some articles in newspapers to summarize, letters to be found in volumes of the "Times," of various dates, *et-cetera*.

I began upon the letters, and found my work really fascinating, and the time flew as if on wings. I was so absorbed that I did not hear the door open, nor a footfall on the carpet, and Mr. Darrell was close to the table before I was aware of his presence.

"I beg your pardon," I said, rising then. "I did not hear you come in."

He smiled and motioned to me to sit down again, but remained standing himself.

"How have you been getting on?" he asked.

"I hope you will think I have got on well," I answered.

"I hope so too." He took up my letters, one by one, and ran quickly through them, putting them down without any comment; and I could not well look into his face to see if that expressed his thoughts, for he was standing close to me. I wondered if he noticed that I had signed them with only the initials of my Christian names; but of course he did; he noticed everything, and he knew why I did it. He came at last to the end of the letters.

"I am more than satisfied so far," Mr. Darrell said; "you are just what a correspondent should be. Now show me what else you have done."

I showed him, feeling very happy that he was pleased with my letters. He looked at the summaries I had made, the quotations I had copied, and some other work.

"Nothing could be better," he declared; "the work is thoroughly well done, and done quickly. You have got through a surprising amount in the time. You are a capital woman of business, Miss Verona."

"I am so glad," I said, "that you are satisfied." I glanced up at him as I said this and he looked down at me with one of his indulgent smiles, and laid his hand for a moment lightly on my shoulder.

"I should be very hard indeed to please, if I were not satisfied," he responded. I almost wonder he did not pat my head. I should not have been much surprised, and certainly not offended.

The luncheon bell then sounding, brought my morning's work to a close.

Mr. Darrell was very silent during luncheon, and, of course, I did

not offer any remark. When the meal was over, I was about to withdraw to the library to my work, when he said—

"Don't commence work again till three, Miss Verona. If you would like to look at the London papers, you will find them in the breakfast-room."

I thanked him, and went out. I found half a dozen newspapers in the breakfast-room, and, as I am a very quick reader, and have the habit of getting the real substance out of a mass of matter, I had time to learn all that was worth learning of the news of the day, before I returned to my labors.

The greatest difficulty I had to contend with was, when looking for the books I was required to find, to abstain from opening the covers of others which mocked me with fascinating titles, also to resist, in many cases, reading beyond the portion I had to copy. But I successfully resisted the temptation, and by five o'clock had got through more work than I had thought I could accomplish in the time.

I had just taken down a large volume of Schiller, when a servant entered with tea, served in porcelain that would have delighted a connoisseur; but, as I know very little about china, I only thought it the prettiest set I had ever seen, and wished Nellie had been with me. How cozy we should have been together! I drank my tea in solitary glory, and then went on with my work again, for there were two or three things I wanted to finish. I was deep in transcribing a passage from Consuelo when the door opened, and Mr. Darrell came in.

"What are you doing?" he asked, advancing and looking over my shoulders. "Miss Verona, it is half-past five. Do you know it?"

"I did know it," I answered. "It does not matter; I wanted to finish this."

"It does matter. You must leave off at five, please."

"Let me finish this, Mr. Darrell."

"No; it will take you ten minutes longer. Take Ian and Hubert with you, and have a run in the park."

I rose obediently. How strangely he treated me! Sometimes as if I were a child, at others with the utmost circumspection. I quickly gathered my papers together and quitted the library.

"The dogs are on the lawn," their master said; and away I sped in search of them.

They were having a romp under the trees—they were both quite young—but the moment I appeared they rushed up to me, and I led the way to the park, running like a fawn, as soon as I was out of sight of the house. How beautiful the park looked in the mellow sunshine! What a game of romps I had with the dogs! I ran races, I played "tug-of-war" with them with a stick; I sent the animals flying after a stone, and hid myself as they scampered off, and it was amusing to see how the blood-hound would put his nose to the ground and scent me out; and then, when he found me, he would rush up with a bark of delight, enjoying the fun as much as I did.

I recollect at last that it was getting near the dinner-hour, and I sprung up from the ground, where I had been resting after my romp, and hurried back to the Chase. As I passed up to my room, I met Mr. Darrell.

"Well," he said, smiling; "have you been running races with Ian and Hubert?"

"Yes," I answered; "we have had a fine game of romps—we three."

"Have you? I am afraid you found the dogs rather rough play-fellows."

"Not too rough. Hubert knocked me down once, but I did not mind a bit."

"You should be careful," Mr. Darrell said, a little anxiously; "a great dog like that might hurt you. I should be afraid for you to romp with Karl."

"Is that the other dog? I have not seen him yet."

"He is laid up with a wounded foot; but I hope he will be about in a day or two. Karl is a German boar-hound. I brought him over with me when he was a month old. He is almost as large as a small pony, and as gentle as a child; but you must not let him knock you down."

I laughed a little guiltily. I dare say Mr. Darrell thought his secretary a rather childish and very undignified young woman.

My employer was more silent at dinner this evening than he had been yesterday, and that made me think that perhaps he wanted to be alone, so I withdrew to my own room, and wrote a long letter to Nellie, detailing all my experiences of the day, and describing, as much as I had yet seen of them, the house and grounds. "I have not been to the music-room yet," I wrote. "I shall ask one of the servants where it is; but I dare say it will be some days before I shall venture to go to it. My employer, I fancy, must be fond of music, for there are plenty of musical instruments about—a splendid 'grand' in the drawing-room that I long to play on; but I don't know whether he plays."

My letter contained almost as much as a pamphlet by the time it was finished, and then I took up a book, and read till past eleven o'clock. It was nearly twelve before I went to bed.

CHAPTER V.

THE next morning brought me a letter from Nellie—not a long one, but a very welcome one—and I read it with avidity. That morning my time was almost taken up in answering letters. Mr. Darrell did not come into the library at all; but at luncheon he told me I could finish work at four, as he was going out in the afternoon, and should not return till dinner-time.

He went out, in fact, shortly after luncheon; I saw him ride down the drive, and I went to the library again.

"What a nice long afternoon I shall have!" I reflected. "I wish I could have a good look through the house; but I don't like to, some one might come."

It was ten minutes past four when I put aside my work, and went out on to the terrace. It was a glorious afternoon, and I gazed wistfully toward the open country. How delightful it would be to go out exploring! But I had the town-bred fear of solitary rambles, and I would not take Hubert with me. His master might not wish

me to do that. The blood-hound came up to me, with his head suggestively on one side, but I shook mine in answer to his appealing look.

"No, old boy," I said, "I mustn't take you into the country; but we may go into the park. Come along!"

I fetched my hat, and away we two went, and spent a very happy two hours; then I returned to the house, and, procuring a book, ensconced myself in the library in a low arm-chair, and Hubert stretched himself contentedly at my feet. I was so interested in the volume, that I took no heed of time, and quite started when the first dinner-bell rang.

"Mr. Darrell must be at home, then," I thought, and ran quickly up to dress.

When I entered the drawing-room, my employer was there, standing in one of the windows, and he at once turned round to greet me.

"I hope," he said, smiling, "that you made good use of your time this afternoon. Have you been exploring the surrounding country?"

"No," I replied; "I went into the park with Hubert."

"You preferred not to go any distance?"

"No," I answered, and I felt my color rising, "it wasn't that, Mr. Darrell; but I was afraid to go alone."

"Well, perhaps you acted wisely. I don't think young girls ought to roam about the country alone. But you would have been perfectly safe with Hubert."

"Yes—only I did not like to take him beyond the park—you had not said I might."

Such a pained, vexed expression came into his face that I felt as if I had done something wrong, instead of having been simply conscientious.

"My dear child," he said, "I left Hubert behind on purpose that he might accompany you in your walk. I am quite vexed that you should have confined your ramble to the park; but, perhaps, it was my fault," he added, as I drooped my head, feeling quite guilty. "I ought to have told you. You need never ask me about taking the dogs; you may take them whenever and wherever you like."

"Thank you so much; and it was very kind of you to leave Hubert."

"It is no matter for thanks," he said indifferently. Then he asked—"Have you been through the house, and seen what there is to see? And have you been to the music-room?"

"No; I went to the library and read."

"You thought you might not go anywhere else without permission?"

"I did not like to go without permission."

"Miss Verona," he said, in a tone of annoyance, "if you were so afraid of treading on possibly prohibited ground, why did you not ask my permission?"

"I thought that it might seem like encroaching, and that perhaps you would not wish to grant the request, and yet would not like to refuse."

He gave me one of those penetrating looks I had seen before, and

his brow cleared. Had he thought, I wondered, that I was afraid of him?

"Please," he said, "make free use of the music-room, and go where you like in the house. The housekeeper will show you over it whenever you please. If there are any parts not open, they are purposely kept locked up. You need not be afraid of trespassing into forbidden regions."

"Thank you very much. I will ask Mrs. Ellis to show me over the house; and I shall certainly avail myself of your permission to use the music-room."

"Do you play or sing?"

"I sing."

"You have been taught singing?"

"Yes."

Just then the butler came to announce dinner, and our conversation came to an abrupt termination.

That evening Mr. Darrell went to his study, and I returned to the library and resumed my book; retiring to my room, though not to bed, in good time.

The next day—Saturday—Mr. Darrell availed himself of my short-hand, dictating to me several letters—one to a weekly paper upon "brain pulsation and transfer of impressions"—too learned for me to quite understand. At half-past three he told me I might cease work, and that I had better take the dogs and go for a walk. I was nothing loath; and a little later I was sauntering through the park with Ian and Hubert by my side.

I found the country very wild and picturesque, and the absence of dwellings and people was peculiarly novel and delightful to me—fresh as I was from the "million-peopled city." Then to climb those heights, and inhale the fresh free air, and look over the wide panorama of richly wooded country; to traverse paths winding in and out among masses of heather, and suddenly plunging into woods; to find one's self by a babbling stream, and to stand on a rustic bridge, and look down at the dancing water—what enchantment it all was to me!

Mr. Darrell had given me general directions, telling me which way to turn for "one of the prettiest walks," but when, warned by the time of day, I decided to turn homeward, I was beset by two difficulties—I did not know the way back, and there was no one to ask. To retrace my steps was impossible; I had taken too many turnings; I did not even know how far I was from Langton Chase. I could not see the house—though it stood on an eminence—from where I was, for the intervening hills shut out my view. However, I thought I had some idea of my bearings, and went quickly forward, looking out, but in vain, for some one who could direct me.

After walking for about a mile—toward the Chase, as I supposed—I climbed a hill, whence, I felt sure, I could obtain a view of Langton; and so I could—but it was behind me! I had been walking away from it!

I carefully surveyed my position. I must get down this hill-side, and go through the wood at the foot. Beyond that was a piece of moorland, and then the hill on which Langton Chase stood. I could

not descend the hill quickly, for it was very steep and rugged, and an incautious step might have caused an ugly fall. But in time—it was fully half an hour—I gained the valley, plunged into the wood, and emerged on the banks of a broad stream, the bright waters of which went dancing and laughing defiantly past me. I stood still, with a momentary feeling of helplessness. There, not more than a mile ahead, as the crow flies, were the gray towers of the Chase, and here, right across my path, was a brook, which did not look as if it could be easily crossed. I gazed down at the water, and decided that it was tolerably deep; moreover, I did not know what sort of footing there was, and therefore wading was out of the question. There were no stones, and as far as I could see there was no bridge. I looked at the dogs, and they wagged their tails, and looked at me, but that did not help me to solve the difficulty. I walked on along the bank and round a bend, but still found no means of getting to the other side of the stream.

I looked at my watch. It was seven o'clock! And I ought to have been at the dinner-table; instead of which I was more than a mile from the Chase, and did not even know how to get back to it. What would Mr. Darrell think? At the least, that I had been very thoughtless in wandering so far away without taking heed of the time, especially as he had let me off more than an hour before the usual time.

My eyes filled with tears; I should not deserve such an opinion; but then my employer did not yet know me. If only I could find a shallow place in the brook, I would wade across; but everywhere the water looked very deep—it might be, in the middle, as much as a fathom or more, and I could not swim in my clothes, though I am a good swimmer. I turned back toward the wood. Must I go that way, and try to discover another road home?

Suddenly my heart leaped with joy. I caught sight of that which, an hour or two before, I had had no wish to see, but which now was a most welcome sight—a human being! It was an old shepherd, emerging from the wood. He was not at all romantic in appearance—shepherds in real life seldom are—but I did not care a jot now for anything Arcadian. I wanted to get back to Langton, and this old fellow in a dirty smock-frock could doubtless tell me the way.

I ran up to him, and he stopped, looking at me with as much astonishment as the bucolic countenance is capable of expressing, but he took no notice of the dogs, a fact which led me to believe that he was not unacquainted with them.

"Please," I said, "can you tell me if I can get across that brook—I want to go to Langton Chase."

"Ye can't wade the brook," he replied, "'tis eight feet deep in ths middle, most parts. Ye can go this way"—pointing through the wood—"and round by Bushwood Hill; or ye can go along the bank—that way"—pointing down the stream—"till ye get to the bridge."

"Which is the shortest way?"

"Well," the old man answered, "they're much the same, I fancy, only the way by Bushwood Hill's more crooked-like, and

ye mightn't find it so easy, though maybe them dogs 'ud know it right enough. 'Tother way's all straight."

"I think I had better take that way; thank you so much. How far down is the bridge?"

"A mile, may be."

I thanked him again, and ran off; though I reflected, there was not much use in running; I could not get home before eight—if then, do what I would, for I knew that when I reached Langton Hill I must walk; to run up an ascent of about a mile and a half was scarcely possible, and, as Mr. Darrell would not have waited long for me, I should not do any good by breathing myself. Nevertheless, I ran a good deal on the level ground, and walked very fast, for I would not be later than I could possibly help. I was so annoyed that I could have cried with vexation; but that was childish, I told myself, and I resolutely refused to let the tears come into my eyes.

I was not long in reaching the bridge—a mere plank—and in another five minutes I was in the park. I looked at my watch as I drew near the house. It was eight o'clock! I felt ashamed to meet Mr. Darrell, and hoped he would not be about anywhere just now, but I would not try to avoid him; that would make him think I had purposely lingered. I went straight to the door by which I had first entered Langton Chase, and passed in, at the same moment coming face to face with Mr. Darrell! I was hot and flushed from my rapid walk, and I felt the blood rush anew even to my brow, as I looked up dreading to see a frown or a look of displeasure; but I met only that kind, sweet smile, that was the sweeter for its sadness.

"Oh, Mr. Darrell," I instantly exclaimed, "I am so sorry! I lost my way, and could not see any one to direct me. You must think me very careless?"

"Why should I think so? I hope you were not frightened?"

"I should not be frightened when I had the dogs with me. You are very kind not to be vexed with me for being late—indeed, I could not help it. I hope you did not wait dinner for me?"

"Certainly I waited. I have not dined yet."

"Oh, Mr. Darrell! I would rather a thousand times you had not waited."

"Would you?" he smiled again. "You seem very disturbed about it; and my only trouble in the matter was that you were hurrying unnecessarily."

"I did hurry with all my might," I assured him; "but not because I thought you would wait. I felt sure that you would not."

"I am sorry you felt so sure. Suppose you had been my guest?"

"Even then an hour's grace would be long. Besides, I am not your guest."

"In all matters of courtesy I consider you so, Miss Verona," he responded gravely.

I did not make any reply to this; I could not just then, but I looked the gratitude I felt, and went away quickly to my room.

At dinner I related to Mr. Darrell my adventures, and he told me that Hubert would have guided me, if I had only known how to invoke his aid.

" You had only to say to him ' Home, Hubert,' " he assured me, " and he would have led you the nearest way."

Ten days later I wrote to Nellie—

" I don't find my life in the least dull, and if only you were here I should be as bright as the sunshine. The hours seem to pass so quickly. I often get half an hour in the music-room before breakfast, and then again before dinner—sometimes an hour. Then there is my work; and you have no idea how interesting that is. The letters Mr. Darrell has! I want to ask him to show me some works he has written, but I haven't summoned courage yet, and he is so reticent about himself; he never tells me of anything he has done. I have been out two or three times with the dogs; and the country round about here is very beautiful.

" In the evenings we are sometimes together in the drawing-room; sometimes I go to my own sitting room, for he may not always want my company; and sometimes he is in his own study. It's odd that I should enjoy a quiet life like this; but then, living in a house like Langton, where all one's pet tastes can be gratified, is not like being in an every-day modern house, with few books, a cottage piano, and work that isn't interesting.

" You see, my work is never wearisome. I should like sometimes to go on later; but Mr. Darrell won't allow that.

" The servants all treat me with the utmost respect, and will do anything for me. The housekeeper and I are capital friends. She is a dear, motherly old lady. Either she does not know anything of her master's troubles, or she is too honorable to speak of them to me. Of course, I have never asked her.

" There is a part of the house locked up—a part of the west wing, and there is a ghost—perhaps more than one. Our ghost is a mediæval lady; but, thank goodness, she keeps to the west wing! One of the house-maids told me about her; but I have not obtained any authentic particulars yet. I don't like to ask Mr. Darrell, or the housekeeper. Sometimes people don't approve of 'speering' about their family ghosts. By the way, I don't believe Mr. Darrell knows my Christian name. He has never asked it, and when I wrote to him I only signed initials. Mind you write soon, Nellie."

CHAPTER VI.

THIS morning my employer asked me if I would like to go and see Karl, the boar-hound. Of course I was delighted, and Mr. Darrell led me to a small stable which the poor dog had entirely to himself. He was a superb animal, and I could not repress a cry of admiration when I saw him, as he rose from the fresh straw on which he was lying, and ran limping to his master, pathetically holding up his wounded paw, which was nearly well. Mr. Darrell caressed him fondly, and Karl was in a fever of delight, rubbing his great head against his master, and giving vent to soft tremulous whines of joy. Then I drew near to pet him, and he welcomed me with remarkable cordiality. Although Karl was only a young dog, he was a formidable-looking animal, and many people would have

shrunk from him; but I never was afraid of dogs, and the bigger they were the better I liked them. Mr. Darrell looked on amused.

"We shall have Karl among us in a day or two," he remarked, and I answered—

"I hope so. I feel inclined to spoil him already."

After that Mr. Darrell showed me the stables. Such beautiful horses he had, and a pretty pair of ponies! I could have the pony-phaeton, he said, whenever I chose, and a horse to ride. I did not know how to thank him for his kindness. I was almost afraid he would think me ungrateful, because I could not say all that I felt; and yet I think he understood.

We did not get the daily papers at Langton until nine o'clock; and then one of the grooms rode over to Durnford for them every morning, or they would have been later. I had plenty of time, therefore, to read the news before I began my day's work. Mr. Darrell usually took the "Times," "Standard," and "Telegraph" into his study, and left me the "Daily News"; and then I could read the others later in the day if I liked.

This morning it was nearly half past nine when I sat down on the terrace with my paper, as we had been to the stables, my employer, as usual, retiring to his study. There was no news of importance to-day, foreign or home, so I threw down the paper and turned to Hubert for amusement; and a little before ten I carried the "Daily News" into the breakfast-room, and went to the library.

Just before luncheon, Mr. Darrell brought me in some more letters to answer, and took up two or three that I had written, and had not yet placed in the envelopes.

"What are your Christian names?" he asked suddenly.

"Vida Teresa."

"Vida?"—and he smiled. "That is an unusual name, 'Conquering,' Teresa—after the saint, I suppose?"

"Yes," I replied.

Mr. Darrell laid down the letters, and as he turned away the light shone full upon his face, and I thought it looked strangely haggard. How my heart ached for him!

"Leave your work now," he said kindly; "it is nearly luncheon-time."

The rest of that day passed much as usual; but the next morning at breakfast Mr. Darrell said he was going to London, and might not return that night; in any case he could not possibly be back till very late.

He started almost immediately after breakfast, and the house seemed very dull when he was gone, although I rarely saw him during the morning. I told the housekeeper I would not have any late dinner, but would make my dinner at luncheon; and, when my work was over in the evening, I went to the music-room and practiced till nearly eight o'clock, at which hour Mrs. Ellis came up and said I must have some supper, and that it had been taken into the dining-room. I could not help smiling at the way in which she took charge of me, and ran down obediently to partake of my solitary supper, of which I was glad enough in one way, but not sorry when it was over. I do not care for taking my meals alone.

Then I repaired to the library, and, seating myself in my favorite arm-chair was soon buried in a queer old eighteenth-century treatise on metaphysics. How the time passed! Eleven o'clock struck before I thought it was ten. Having finished my book, I laid it aside and took up another. This proved to be all about supernatural appearances. I resolutely turned from it, for I was half afraid to sit alone at midnight in this ancient library, and fill my imagination with visions of the unseen world. I should not have courage to traverse the stairways and corridors to my own room; and they were "ghostly" enough to an excited fancy, without any assistance from books.

I soon found a work that pleased me—a history of Langton Chase and its owners, written some fifty years before, and in this I quickly became deeply interested. There were three or four ghosts here, it seemed, as I discovered in the course of my reading; the most notable being a lady who haunted that portion of the Chase that I had not seen, as it was kept locked up. Then there was a cavalier who sometimes paced the picture-gallery, and several appearances of this specter were recorded. It did not seem that he had any special mission, and his only apparent reason for haunting the picture-gallery was that there he had, in the flesh, been murdered. This cavalier was a Bertram Darrell also, and had lived in the reign of Elizabeth. With a beating heart I sought for evidence of the library being haunted, but, to my great relief, found none; but I made a mental note against going into the picture-gallery after nightfall, or into the shrubbery, where, when anything was about to happen to the Darrells, a maiden with long yellow hair appeared and wrung her hands and seemed to weep.

I read on and on, and midnight chimed unheeded, though in the absolute stillness of the room I should have heard the lightest sound that I was not accustomed to. A movement of the door-handle, as a hand was laid on it from without, made me start, almost violently. I dropped the book and rose with a beating heart as the door opened, and Mr. Darrell came in.

"Miss Verona!" he exclaimed in surprise, but with no trace of annoyance in his voice.

Oh, how relieved I was! I had been afraid that he would be displeased to find me there; now I felt sure that for the moment, at any rate, he was not sorry that there was some one to meet him, some voice to speak to him, when he came back to his loveless home.

He came forward quickly, holding out his hands to me; and as I gave him my right hand he held it fast in both his own, but did not speak.

"I did not think you would return to-night, Mr. Darrell," I said rather hurriedly and confusedly; "and I got reading, and did not heed the time. I beg your pardon."

"Beg my pardon—for what?" he asked gently.

"Well," I replied, looking up, "for being here. I ought to have gone to my room long ago."

"You ought to have been asleep for your own sake, my child, instead of sitting up till one o'clock reading; but for my sake I am very, very glad to find you here."

How happy it made me to hear him say that!

"Are you really?" I said involuntarily, though there was no need for the question. I knew he never spoke falsely.

"You are a strange girl!" was his reply, with a smile that puzzled me. He had held my hand all this time; he dropped it now, and sat down in the chair from which I had risen. I saw on his face that haggard look I had noticed in the morning; I hesitated; then spoke.

"The servants are all gone to bed, Mr. Darrell"—I knew there was a private entrance by which he could come into the house without rousing any one—"can I get anything for you? You must need something, after your long journey."

"You are very good," he answered; "but I could not trouble you, even if I needed anything. A glass of wine and a biscuit by and by will be quite sufficient."

"It would be no trouble, Mr. Darrell."

"I am sure of that"—with his sweet kind smile. "I don't think you find anything a trouble that is done for some one else."

I shrank from the praise, though it was very pleasant to hear it from him.

"You must have walked from the station," I observed.

"What of that? I am a good pedestrian—six miles is nothing to me."

"It might seem long after a railway journey," I responded, moving a step toward the door. I thought it was cruel to leave him just now; and yet, what else could I do? It was one o'clock, and besides he probably did not wish for my society any longer.

"Are you going to run away?" Mr. Darrell asked, in a quick low tone.

I turned back and held out my hand.

"I did not mean to go without saying good-night!" I stammered confusedly. "I hope you did not think that?"

He took my hand and held it lightly in his own, rising at the same time.

"No," he said. "I should never suspect you of discourtesy. I was more selfish. Forgive me! I must not detain you. Good-night, my child. Heaven bless you!"

He dropped my hand and resumed his seat; but I did not move.

"Mr. Darrell," I said hesitatingly, "I will stay if you wish it."

He gave me one of his searching looks; but it was wistful too; then, with an involuntary restless movement, he shook his head.

"No, Miss Verona, it is time you were at rest. You must be weary. I ought not to wish you to stay."

Could I remain after this? I turned slowly toward the door, then paused, looking back, and, before I could consider whether I did right or wrong, the words were out of my mouth—

"Please let me!" I pleaded, under my breath.

Mr. Darrell, who had been leaning his head on his hand, looked up quickly, and a strange light flashed into his eyes.

"Come then," he said softly, "for a few moments, at any rate."

I went up to him, and the relief his words gave me must have been reflected in my face, for Mr. Darrell half smiled, as he drew a low chair beside his own and placed me in it.

" You true woman," he said. " You think I need comfort, and so you are not willing to leave me, when I wish you to stay."

I colored deeply, for I could not deny the truth of his words. I drooped my head, and murmured—

" You seemed troubled. I—I could not help seeing that, and, if you wished me to stay, I could not want to go."

Mr. Darrell did not answer at once; but took my hand in his and held it closely. I could not speak; it would have been presumption on my part to intrude upon the reserve he chose to maintain; and besides, what could I say? He must have known and felt that he had all my sympathy without any words of mine.

He spoke at last in a suppressed tone.

" Yes," he said. " I am troubled—most bitterly, bitterly troubled. I don't mind saying this to you, it is a relief to me. It does comfort me to have your silent sympathy, and I am very grateful to you for that sympathy."

I do not think he knew how tightly his fingers closed over my hand; they seemed almost to cling to it. His words almost choked my utterance. However I managed to master myself and to answer steadily—

" You have no cause for gratitude to me, Mr. Darrell. It is I who would be ungrateful were I to withhold my sympathy, for you have been so very, very kind to me."

" Have I? I did not know it. You must have a faculty for discovering benefits, Miss Verona. There are not many like you; the world is generally slow to recognize favors. And now you are staying here to comfort me when you are tired, and ought to be sleeping."

" No; I am not tired, and I believe, if you had not come home, I should have gone on reading until two o'clock."

" That is wrong; you should not sit up so late. What were you reading?"

" First, a treatise on metaphysics, written in the last century; and then I found a history of Langton Chase."

" Did you read about the banshee—the yellow-haired maiden?"

" Yes. Has she ever been really seen, Mr. Darrell?"

" Ay, truly; again and again. Her coming portends misfortune or death. But we will not talk about such things now. You will be afraid to go to sleep. I will tell you all about her at some other time."

Then he roused himself, and glanced at the time-piece.

" It is nearly two o'clock," he said, " and I have been rebuking you for sitting up so long! I must send you away. Thank you, a thousand times, for your company. You have been a great comfort to me."

I could not keep my lips from trembling, as I rose and said earnestly—

" I am very, very glad of that, Mr. Darrell."

He had risen too, and his right hand clasping mine, he laid his left on my shoulder and looked down into my face.

" True as steel," he said, softly and steadily, and more, I thought, to himself than to me—" true as steel!"—then—" Good-night, once more, my child—Heaven keep you!"

He released me, and I turned away, feeling strangely happy.

CHAPTER VII.

I AWOKE the next morning with a sense of something pleasant having happened, and in a moment it all came back to my mind. I lay for some time reveling in the thought that I was trusted—that I had power to give comfort to the man who had shown me so much kindness, and who suffered so much. And his suffering was not merely the shadow of the past; it was in the present also. My eyes filled with tears as I repeated to myself his words, “I am troubled—most bitterly, bitterly troubled.” What a world of meaning underlay such words from such a man! And again, for the hundredth time, I found myself trying to conjecture what was the nature of the burden he had to bear; but I presently checked myself; it seemed like disloyalty to even canvass in thought that which it was not my business to know.

I rose hastily, and dressed, and ran down to have a stroll—or, to be more correct—a romp with the dogs in the grounds before the morning meal.

When I entered the breakfast-room Mr. Darrell was already there, and greeted me with his usual smile.

“I see,” he said, “that you have been having a run with Ian and Hubert. I hope Karl will be able to join us to-day.”

When the letters came in there was one for me from Nellie. Seeing me put it aside, Mr. Darrell told me not to stand on ceremony; so I opened it and glanced rapidly over it. I saw there was no bad news, and so, as it was a long letter, I laid it down for perusal afterward.

When Mr. Darrell had gone to his study, I read my letter at leisure; and I almost uttered an exclamation of astonishment when I read that Nellie was thinking of taking a “resident” situation.

“ You will be surprised to hear, Vida,” she wrote, “ that I am likely to close with an offer to go as resident governess. It’s awfully dull here without you, and the people with whom I should be are very nice, I believe. I will tell you all about it, so far as I know at present. I have been pondering the matter for the past fortnight, and three days ago I saw an advertisement in the ‘Post,’ which I answered. It was for a governess, who spoke ‘French fluently, etcetera, to teach two girls in the country. Salary liberal. Application, in the first instance, to Mrs. Lavender, Rose House, Clapham Common.’ The address didn’t sound inviting. However I decided to go and inquire about it. I was agreeably surprised. Mrs. Lavender turned out to be a perfect lady—a woman you would have ‘made a note’ of for a novel; in age about forty, with a fair, sweet, calm face, and the kindest manner imaginable. She is, it seems, the sister of the advertiser, and had been commissioned to choose a governess for Mrs. Walton, who lives in North Wales. The Waltons—there is a *pater extant*—are rich people, and will give forty-five pounds and washing; paying traveling expenses down. Mrs. Lav-

ender said she liked me, and she had already seen over twenty applicants that day—for of course I could not go till the afternoon; luckily it was a half-holiday. Then came my religion. Would Mrs. Walton object to a Catholic? Mrs. Lavender's face changed. I had taught, I informed her, in a Protestant family for over a year, and always accompanied the girls on their walks, and the lady would bear me out that I never tampered with my pupils' religion. Mrs. Lavender's face cleared. She would write to her sister, she assured me, and let me know, adding that she would recommend me, in spite of the 'religious difficulty'; so I think my chances are good; but I would not finally decide without writing to you.

"What do you say? I should have a holiday at Christmas—so we could be together then, for I suppose you will have a holiday. Let me know what you think about the proposed change."

I laid down the letter. It seemed a strange thing for Nellie to go out as resident governess; but, after all, it would be much nicer for her than living in those dreary lodgings by herself, and, as she said, we could be together at Christmas. I would write to Nellie by to-day's post, and advise her to accept the situation, if Mrs. Walton offered it to her. Then I read Nellie's letter again, looked over the newspapers, and betook myself to my secretarial duties.

Two days later I heard again from Nellie. Mrs. Walton had accepted her, but she was not to go for another month; her agreement with her present employer had been for a month's notice.

"I wish I could see you before I go down to Llandwr," wrote Nellie, "but that can not be; so I must not complain."

I wished too that I could see my sister, but I could not ask for even a day's leave of absence so soon.

That day, after dinner, as we sat in the drawing-room, Mr. Darrell said—

"Miss Verona, may I ask a favor of you?"

"You are very good to put the question in that form," I answered. "I will do whatever you wish—if I can."

"Thank you for the trust that your answer implies. Then—will you sing me something?"

The color came into my cheeks, and my heart beat faster, but I rose at once.

"I will do my best," I replied, "to please you."

"I think I am sure to be pleased."

But I felt rather dubious on that point, as I went upstairs to fetch my music. I had selected a song he was sure to like, though he had, of course, heard it sung by professionals—Brahms's "Cradle Song." I did not bring down the folio, for that might look as if I wanted to be asked for more than one song.

When I re-entered the drawing-room, I found Mr. Darrell had opened the piano, and was standing near it.

"You know this, of course?" I said, showing him the music.

"Ah, yes—it is a favorite of mine."

As I took my place, he went and sat down in an arm-chair at a little distance, where he could hear to the best advantage. I thought I should feel nervous in singing before him; but I did not, and I know that I never sung better than I did that evening. Mr.

Darrell sat with his eyes fixed upon the floor, his head resting on his hand. When I had finished he remained perfectly still for nearly a minute; then he looked up, and said softly—

"Thank you, very, very much. Will you sing that through once more?"

I obeyed; and again he thanked me.

"You have been remarkably well taught," he said, "and you have the Irish gift of song—I knew you could sing, by your musical voice when speaking. Don't move from the piano, please. May I not hear something more?"

"I did not know you would care for more than one, Mr. Darrell."

"I would keep you at the piano all night, I think, if I had my will. Sing me an Irish ballad. Do you know any by heart?"

"I know so many that I hardly know which to choose."

"I shall want more than one"—with a smile.

I smiled in return, and chose "Eileen Aroon," then "The Green Banks of Shannon," and then a wild sort of wailing melody, in those passionate minors that are only found in the native Irish and Scotch music; and that I had to repeat. Then Mr. Darrell said, in that suppressed tone I had heard once before—

"Thank you, a thousand times; you must be tired now. Presently, perhaps, you will sing just one more."

I closed the piano, but did not immediately move from my seat. It had grown quite dusk while I sung, and I could not clearly see my companion's face: but I knew by his voice that he was deeply moved. He rose from his seat, and stepped through one of the windows as the footman entered to light the candles.

When the servant had retired, I went and sat on the sofa, and took up a book, but I did not read much. I could not see Mr. Darrell from where I sat; he was either standing still or sitting, for there was not even the sound of a footprint on the terrace. So fully half an hour passed. The moon was shining brightly; I turned my face to the window, and gazed out at the dreamland scene it framed, and my feelings were a strange blending of happiness and sadness. Suddenly Mr. Darrell's finely-modulated voice fell upon my ear, calling me softly by name—"Miss Verona."

I at once rose and went out to him. He was standing leaning on the balustrade of the terrace, and, as I drew near, he turned to me, saying—

"Come and enjoy this glorious night. You don't find it chilly, do you?"

"No," I answered, "it is quite warm; and what a lovely night!"

I paused too, resting my arms on the balustrade, and looking up at the deep cloudless blue. All was hushed and still in that solemn calm of night.

My thoughts went back to London. This same moon was shining down upon the noisy bustling streets, blending with countless glaring gas-jets; and Nellie was perhaps sitting at the open window, behind her the dark dreary room, beneath her the dusty streets; and then my thoughts traveled back further still, to the moonlight nights in Paris, and I saw Nellie and myself, two little slim, shabbily dressed figures, wandering along the gay boulevards, with our father, shabby too, but always carrying himself with the dignity of a

grand seigneur; and I recalled how we used to listen outside the *cafés chantants* in the Champs Elysées, and laugh at the bad singing; and then we would saunter on by the Seine to Passy, and roam in and out among the trees of La Muette, and count the lights in the windows, of the villas peeping through the foliage; and oh, the scent of the limes! The air I was breathing now was full of the scent of limes.

I do not know how long it was—not many minutes perhaps—before Mr. Darrell laid his hand on mine and asked me what I was thinking about. I did not start, for I had not forgotten him, not for a moment; but I smiled, and answered—

“ My thoughts were traveling back to the past. The moonlight, and the scent of the lime-trees, made me think of the old time in Paris.”

“ A time you regret?”

“ No,” I replied; “ it was not a happy time, except by fits and starts. We extracted some of the fun out of life. Irish people always manage to do that. Besides, we were children then.”

“ Children are fortunate. They know so little, after all; their happiness flourishes on such small sustenance! But you are fond of Paris? You would like to return to it?”

“ With Nellie, you mean?” My eyes turned unconsciously to the moonlight sky, and then descended slowly to the dark groves of trees. Why was it I could not answer “ Yes”? I did not know. It had always been one of my strongest wishes that Nellie and I should some day return to Paris to live. When had the wish dropped out of my thoughts? Why had I now a curious sense of incompleteness in that idea?—a feeling, too undefined to grasp or name, that Paris, even with Nellie, would be banishment? Mr. Darrell had replied to my interrogation—“ With Nellie, of course;” and presently I said—

“ No; I don’t think I want to return to Paris—not to live there. Why should you think I did?”

“ Paris acts like a charm on people who have once known it, and people of your temperament would prefer it to London.”

“ I do prefer it to London.”

Mr. Darrell did not speak again for some moments. Presently he observed—

“ You heard from your sister this morning; did you not? I hope she is well.”

“ She is like me, Mr. Darrell—never ill. She is going out as resident governess.”

“ Is she? Where—in London?”

“ No; in North Wales. Llandwr, the name of the place is.”

“ Yes? Are they nice people? I hope—you must not think me curious for asking—that she has not lost her employment in London?”

“ I think you very kind indeed,” I responded earnestly, “ to trouble to inquire after my sister. Oh, no; the lady she is leaving is most sorry to lose her! But it is very lonely for her being in lodgings by herself; and then this situation will really pay her better.”

“ And you think she will be happy there?”

“ I hope so. She will be if the lady—Mis. Walton—is like her

sister; it was the sister Nellie saw, and she quite took to her. There are only two children—girls of ten and twelve."

"When does your sister go to North Wales?"

"Not for another month."

"You would like to see her before she goes?"

"I am content to wait till Christmas, Mr. Darrell. She will have a holiday then, and perhaps you would be able to spare me for a little while then. People can't expect to see each other often in this work-a-day world."

"Of course you will go at Christmas; and you are a wise girl to be so philosophical; but, if I can spare you for a few days, why should you not go and see your sister before she leaves London? You would like to do so; would you not?"

His kindness touched me so deeply that I could hardly answer him steadily.

"Yes," I replied. "I should like to see Nellie; but I could not endure to encroach on your goodness, or to put you to the least inconvenience. I have not been here two months yet. I would rather wait till Christmas, thank you."

He took my hand in his, and held it with a gentle pressure.

"I don't want you to leave me, Heaven knows," he said, in a low voice; "but we must see about it presently. You would not want to go just yet. I wonder what time it is?" he said abruptly, looking at his watch. "Half-past ten," he went on. "Do you want to go in yet?"

"Not just yet."

He gathered a few flowers absently, and let them fall. Then he plucked a superb damask rose—my favorite flower, as it happened—and gave it to me.

"Oh, thanks!" I said. "The damask rose is my pet among flowers!"

"Is it? Then I am fortunate in my choice. But you never gather any."

"They are not mine to gather, Mr. Darrell."

He looked at me with a curious expression on his countenance.

"You are a strange girl," he returned, with a smile. "Did I not tell you to do what you liked? You did not think I meant it?"

"I am sure you meant it; but I don't like to accept such permissions at their full value!"

"You don't accept them at half their value. You would deem it 'encroaching'—is that it?"

"Yes," I answered, turning aside. His hand was laid lightly on mine.

"Don't treat me like that, Vida," he said gently, almost pleadingly; "I want you to have such trust in me that you will not imagine I could misjudge you."

There were tears in my throat, and my heart was throbbing fast.

"But how," I asked slowly, that I might speak steadily, "can I treat you like that unless I know that you trust me?"

"True." He moved his hand from mine rather quickly. Was he vexed with me? I could not bear the thought. "Will you believe me if I tell you that I do?" he said, after a pause.

"Yes—oh, yes!" I could not say more, but the words came full from my heart.

He did not answer, but moved away a few steps, and that made me fear more than ever that he was vexed with me. What more could I do or say to remove an erroneous impression? I stood irresolute. At that moment the clock in the tower began to strike eleven. I hardly knew whether I was glad or sorry to hear the signal for my departure.

"Mr. Darrell," I said, "I must go in now."

He turned at once, and came up to me, holding out his hand. The moonlight shone full upon his face, which, I noticed, looked more than usually stern and grave.

"Good-night," he responded softly, holding my hand in both his own—"good-night." But he did not smile as he generally did. I could not go like this—believing he was pained or angry.

"Mr. Darrell," I said impetuously, "are you vexed with me?" He started at the words.

"My child," he replied, "what could make you think that?"

"Your manner just now—please forgive me if I am wrong."

"My manner just now?" He stood quite still for a moment; then he dropped my hand and turned away. "You are wrong," he added kindly—"quite wrong; but there is nothing to forgive. I was not vexed. I could never be vexed with you, Vida."

And I went away to my own room—happy once more.

CHAPTER VIII.

FOR the next few days I scarcely saw Mr. Darrell, except at meals, and then his manner, though as kind as ever, was, it seemed to me, more reserved. In the evenings he would go to his study, and I to my own rooms, or to the music-room. One evening he came into the library a few minutes before I had finished my work, with a bundle of letters in his hand.

"I wonder," he said, "if you could get through these before dinner? I want them to go out by the night post."

"I think I could," I responded; "and, if not, I can go on during dinner."

"Certainly not. I should have dinner delayed, if necessary, but it will not be; the post does not go out until ten. I would see to the letters myself, only I have other work to finish."

He laid them upon the table, and quitted the room.

I found however that I could not finish them before dinner. Three or four were rather troublesome to answer, and I was obliged to be very careful with them; so when I met Mr. Darrell in the dining-room I told him I had still three letters left to write.

"Leave them for me," he said, but I shook my head.

"No," I answered resolutely, "let me finish them, please."

He looked at me, and yielded, and after dinner I went back to the library.

The evening had closed in stormily. The rain beat wildly against

and I was glad of it; it made the room look cheerful in contrast with the howling tempest without.

I had just light enough to finish my last letter, and rang the bell for the servant to take the missives in to Mr. Darrell. I did not want to light the lamps, for I had promised myself a delicious *dolce far niente* in the "deep gloaming," with only the ruddy firelight glow to illuminate the room. There were low settles, luxuriously cushioned, on either side of the chimney, and I seated myself on one of these, and leaned back, gazing into the dancing flames, and listening to the wild concert of wind and rain outside. What a time for ghost stories and tales of terrible adventure on rock-bound coasts! And yet I was not thinking of ghosts, but of a creature of flesh and blood. Suddenly I started, and every nerve thrilled, as the door opened softly, and Mr. Darrell entered. I rose, and he came forward to the fire.

"All alone?" he queried. "Am I interrupting you?"

"No," I answered, smiling; "I was doing nothing."

"I might have broken in upon your thoughts."

the windows and the wind howled dismally round the house. It was so chilly that Mr. Darrell had had a fire kindled in the library,

Scarcely, when he was their living embodiment.

"No," I answered again, "I was only enjoying the firelight, and the storm outside."

"And peopling all the dark corners with ghosts and hobgoblins, eh?"

I shook my head.

"I was not, indeed."

"Or were you riding off on an imaginary broomstick to London—to Nellie?"

There was something in his tone that puzzled me a little. Why should not I think of Nellie? Yet, perhaps, he might think I was not happy here, and was always hankering after my London home.

"I don't think Nellie is ever out of my thoughts altogether," I said, "but I was not riding off to London or anywhere."

He turned away with a half sigh, and sat down on the settle opposite to mine.

Presently he broke the short silence.

"This is a night, truly, for tales of shipwreck and disaster. It was on such a night as this the 'Royal Charter' went to pieces—you were a baby in the nursery then—but I remember the gale well."

"I have heard of it," I said, wondering vaguely why he thought of that particular shipwreck; was it connected in his mind with any important event? His next words answered my mental query.

"It was on that night," he went on, "that I saw the yellow-haired maiden—and Heaven knows I had reason to believe the tradition connected with her!"

My heart thrilled as I heard him.

"Did you see her face to face?" I asked, under my breath.

"Face to face. She stood opposite to me—within ten feet, and wrung her hands, gazing at me the while. I should think fully two minutes passed before she vanished; for I, you may well believe, had no power to move."

"How awful—how awful!" I clasped my hands together invol-

untarily. "And have you no idea what form the disaster may take?"

"None," he replied gloomily; "it may be death; and how can one arrest death? It came to me in a form in which I might have detected peril; but I was blind, and saw the peril--as usual--when too late. Again, I might not be the victim, but some other member of my house. A week before my father died, the maiden appeared—not to him, but to a guest staying in the house. My father was then in robust health. He was killed in the hunting-field; his horse stumbled, and flung him heavily. He never spoke again."

Mr. Darrell dropped his head upon his hand for a few moments; yet, bitter as these reminiscences were, it doubtless relieved him to speak of them to one who could truly sympathize. Presently he looked up.

"You wanted to hear the story of the maiden," he said. "Shall I tell it to you now? Or are you afraid?"

"Oh, no; I should like to hear it now, so much!"

"Well, come here, then, and sit by me. It is a story of a nature worshiping clay as gold; of a woman's loyalty and faith betrayed, and love ruthlessly trampled upon. We call it a legend, but it is a true story, Vida. Guinevere Darrell was a living woman, and I am suffering now for the wrong that was done to her. There is a portrait in the picture-gallery—no doubt you have noticed it—which is said to be that of Guinevere—a faded, indistinct portrait, painted in the stiff ungraceful style of the day."

"Yes, I have seen it, and tried to make out the face, but I could not trace much more than the outlines."

"It may not even be Guinevere's portrait; that it is a family tradition, for which I will not vouch, only that the wimple round the head seems to have been intended for that of a novice, though it is too much faded to make sure that it was not the ordinary wimple worn by young girls of the period."

"She was a novice, then?" I asked.

"Ay, there is sacrilege to make my ancestor's sin the darker. Guinevere, who is said to have been very lovely—nay, I may say certainly who was very lovely—for the face I saw was of surpassing beauty—was an orphan cousin of the then lord of Langton Chase—Bertram Darrell—we have had many Bertrams. Guinevere, who was portionless, was left to Bertram's guardianship. He was then an old man, but his eldest son Piers was in the prime of manhood. His portrait is not in the picture-gallery, or in any room you have had access to. It hangs in an old armory in the west wing—in the portion that is locked up. It was not fit that the likeness of a dishonored knight should be placed among those of the kinsmen he had shamed.

"Piers was a man of wild ungoverned passions, who never suffered anything to cross his will or interfere with his pleasure. He fell in love with his cousin, Guinevere, who shrunk from him in horror; moreover, she was a *dévote*, and intended to enter the convent which then, and until the reign of Henry VIII., stood in the valley, on the other side of the brook you have often crossed; there is not a stone of it standing now. In addition to the obstacle I have mentioned, Guinevere and Piers were within the forbidden degrees.

Piers swore that he would obtain a dispensation, and, failing that, was villain enough to urge his cousin to forego marriage.

"Guinevere's position was a terrible one; her guardian was old and feeble; her lover utterly unscrupulous and determined. She was compelled to have recourse to *finesse*. She professed to listen to his suit, but insisted that he must obtain the dispensation, without which she could not be his legal wife, and she said she would kill herself sooner than accept a dishonorable position. Piers was rich and powerful, and his uncle was high in favor at the Vatican. He went to Rome, fully believing in Guinevere's changed feelings. No sooner however was he safely out of sight than Guinevere's confessor, who had supported her in her diplomacy, contrived to place her as a novice in a convent in Nottinghamshire, and even old Sir Bertram did not know where she was. Guinevere was, I suppose, about sixteen at this time.

"Piers came back to find the bird flown, and to learn that he had been duped by Guinevere and her confessor, who had also fled, and could not be found. Piers had not gained his dispensation, but he was not a man to falter because he had legitimately lost his cause. Do I weary you, Vida?"

"Oh, no, no!" I answered breathlessly; my cheeks were burning with intense interest; the wild fury of the rain and the howl of the wind made grawsome accompaniment to the soft rich voice that was giving vivid life to this grim record of dark and troubled ages.

Mr. Darrell smiled a little and went on—

"Bertram Darrell died almost immediately after his son's return to England, having, in the fashion of those days, betrothed Piers to Adela de Fulke. Piers accepted his fate so far, but was none the less determined to seek out his Cousin Guinevere. It is said that to attain his object he traveled through the country in the guise of a mendicant friar, and in this way came at length to the convent where Guinevere was serving her novitiate, and beheld her in the choir. It seems that he then contrived to persuade the abbess that infinite good would result from a pilgrimage to a holy well about three miles from the convent. Guinevere, always *dévote*, eagerly joined in the pilgrimage, and when the nuns were about half-way on the road, Piers, disguised as a robber, and assisted by some of his retainers, fell upon the party, and seized Guinevere by force, leaving the others unmolested.

"Guinevere was carried away to Langton Chase, and imprisoned in the west wing. Her captor showed her some parchment which he declared was a dispensation from Rome, enabling them to marry, and the poor girl had no choice but to accept the terms offered. She would at least—as she believed—be her cousin's lawful wife. Guinevere, it seems, actually grew to love Piers, even to forgive him the sacrilege that was wrought for love of her; and so great was her faith in him that she appears to have believed his story that he dared not acknowledge her as his wife until he had freed himself from Adela de Fulke. You know that, in those days, betrothal was almost as binding as marriage.

"At last Piers married Adela de Fulke, and brought her to the Chase. Guinevere, ere long, heard rumors of her rival's presence, and questioned Piers; but one evening she met him in what is now

the shrubbery, but which was then forest-land, where, as it was screened from observation, she often walked. She demanded public recognition of her position, and bitterly reproached him for having caused her to forsake her duty to Heaven, and taught her to worship a human idol. Piers's reply was to taunt her with her credulity, to assure her that the dispensation was concocted, and to inform her that Adela de Fulke was his lawful wife.

"Mad with despair, Guinevere vowed that she would have dire vengeance; she would go straight to the bishop and denounce Darrell for the sacrilege he had committed; he should be known as a dis-honored knight, who had wronged a kinswoman. The threat was only too real. Piers drew his dagger, and stabbed his cousin to the heart. She fell, but with her dying breath called down the curse of Heaven upon her murderer, and swole to be with him always. 'My blood,' she said, 'shall cry from the ground against his house, and I will bring you death and disaster. Woe, woe to this house for the foul wrong done to its own blood, and to the bride of Heaven!'

"In the family archives, Vida, there is a quaint old document that I will show you, purporting to be the last confession of Piers Darrell, written out by his confessor. There is no reason to doubt the authenticity of that document. In it Darrell records his crimes against his cousin, and relates many things that passed between them. The last words of his victim are recorded by him as having been uttered by her, 'with wringing of her hands.' He says also that she never left him, but day and night haunted him, always with wringing of hands and seeming to cry, 'Woe, woe!'

"He died within two years of that dastardly murder, worn out by remorse and the anguish of forever beholding the form of his victim, which, it is said, was with him even in his dying moments.

"That is the story, Vida, of the yellow-haired maiden."

A terrible story indeed—a record of treachery and "murder most foul;" a miserable story of a woman's weakness and blind faith, and a man's brutality and deception. Such black crimes as Piers Darrell's might well bring down a curse upon his descendants; and yet, in those fierce times, did he stand alone? This man who sat beside me, noble, gentle, loyal, could not suffer for the sins of a man who had lain five hundred years in his grave—the dead hand, though red with the innocent blood of a kinswoman, could have no such power. I trembled involuntarily at the dreadful thought, and clasped my hands together.

Mr. Darrell, putting his arm about me, drew me to his side.

"My poor child," he said tenderly; "I have made you nervous! You are too imaginative to hear such things."

"No, no!" I cried, struggling for calmness, and strangely soothed by the clasp that infolded me, and by his gentle voice and words. "It is not that—at least"—instinctively correcting myself—"it is not that only. I am afraid I am very foolish"—trying to smile—"but thank you so much for telling me the story."

I lifted myself as I spoke, and he drew his arm away.

"I don't think you foolish," he said gravely. "But I am sure you will be afraid to go alone to your room to-night."

I glanced at the clock. It was time I went. I rose at once to retire.

"I will not give way," I assured him. "I shall not be afraid when once I am in the room."

"Let me come with you, then, as far as the gallery." I hesitated, and he smiled. "Come," he said.

At the entrance to the gallery upon which my rooms opened, he turned to leave me, but I held out my hand, and he bent down and kissed it. The pleasant thrill of that kiss never left my hand all night.

CHAPTER IX.

THE time drew near for Nellie to go to Llandwr, and Mr. Darrell had not again alluded to my proposed journey to London. I tried to hope that he had forgotten it, or had accepted my repudiation of the desire to go; but any such hopes were scattered to the winds when one afternoon, a little before five, he came into the library, and bade me put aside what I was doing.

"Your sister," he said, sitting down near the table, as I obeyed him, "is going to Wales very shortly, is she not?"

"Yes; this day week."

"Suppose, then, you were to go up to town to-morrow, and return the day she leaves. I can manage to spare you."

"Mr. Darrell, please, I would rather not go."

"You think," he said, smiling, "that you are so valuable that I can not do without you."

I shook my head, laughing.

"You know I am not so conceited; but it must put you to inconvenience. The work has to be done, and, if I am not here to do it, you will. I never dreamed of having any holiday now. I should feel all the time that I was encroaching on your kindness."

"My kindness!" he repeated, biting his lip. "If you had asked for the time, Vida," he added, after a pause, "you might talk like that, but the idea was mine. Where does encroachment come in?"

"You seem to imply that because a kindness is offered freely, there can be no hinderance in taking advantage of it."

"You are too sensitive, Vida. You know there is a happiness in making other people happy, is there not?—and I have had little real pleasure the last twenty years. So you must not deny me this."

What could I answer? I could not hold out when he put it in that way—to please him was my great desire.

"For a few days, then," I consented, glancing up after a pause, when I dared trust my voice—for his last words produced a choking sensation in my throat.

"No," he said, very quietly, and not meeting my eyes; "let it be a week."

He moved his hand from my shoulder, and just swept his fingers lightly through my curls—the touch seemed to go straight to my heart and take away my breath—then turned and left the room.

That evening after dinner Mr. Darrell retired to his study, and I to my room. It was with strangely mixed feelings that I packed in a small portmanteau the things I should need during my stay in town. I made no attempt at self-analysis—perhaps I instinctively

shrunk from it; but I felt in a kind of bewilderment. I wanted to see my dear old Nell—and how delighted she would be!—but I did not want to leave Bertram Darrell. I did not realize the truth that in my heart of hearts I would prefer staying where I was—and yet I did wish to go.

I was to leave the next day by a noonday train; and at breakfast Mr. Darrell told me the dog-cart would be at the door for me at eleven.

"So you will have plenty of time," he added. "I should like to drive you over myself, but it is better that I should not, I think."

When he rose to leave the room he laid an envelope before me; I looked up wonderingly, but he had already turned away, and had closed the door behind him. With trembling fingers I opened the envelope. There was a check for the salary not yet due, and five pounds had been added to the amount. The blood rushed to my temples, and my heart beat fast at this additional proof of my employer's thoughtful kindness and generosity; he not only paid me in advance, but added far more than the expenses of the journey to and fro.

I went up to dress, and, when I was ready, I proceeded to the library, where I was told Mr. Darrell was, to say good-bye to him.

He was sitting in my place at the table, but rose as I entered the room, and came forward to meet me.

"You are going, then?" he said, taking my ungloved hands in his.

"Yes; and, Mr. Darrell, thank you very, very much for your kindness to me. I mean—you know what I mean," I added, not very felicitously, I am afraid—it is so difficult to express one's gratitude.

"Nonsense!" he said, a slight color crossing his face, usually very pale. "I don't want any thanks. I hope you will enjoy yourself very much, and if I knew your sister—I hope I may do so some day—I would send her kind greetings."

"Won't you do that now, Mr. Darrell?" I asked, looking up into his handsome face. "Nellie would be so pleased."

"You think she would? You would—you warm-hearted daughter of Erin. Give her the message, then; I send it—*con amore*. Mind you write and tell me what train you are coming back by. Ah, there is the dog-cart! Now I must really say good-bye." He held my hands very closely, and stooped and kissed them, with a long, clinging kiss. "Good-bye, Vida," he said, huskily; "take care of yourself"—the next words were almost whispered, but I am sure they were—"for my sake."

I could not say a word; I turned away mechanically, for my heart was in a tumult. He opened the door and went out with me to the dog-cart, handing me up to my place.

"*Au revoir*," he said, shaking hands with me, face and voice under perfect control now—he might have been a different man for all trace there was of the emotion he had shown a minute ago. The driver touched the horse lightly with the whip, and we were off, with Karl bounding on before.

* * * * *

I bought a magazine to while away the journey up to town, but I

did not read a line of it; I had enough to occupy my thoughts, and sat for the most part gazing out of the window, though I saw nothing of the ever-shifting panorama. There were other people in the carriage, but I was quite oblivious of their conversation.

"For my sake," he had said; yes, those were the words, I was almost certain; and his parting kiss still lingered on my hand. Would he miss me much?—would he feel lonely without me? Was I ungrateful to leave him? Yet he would not take a refusal. Then I thought of the terrible story of Guinevere; it had haunted me ever since I heard it, and had taken a singular hold upon my imagination. Faith betrayed, love trampled upon. Had Bertram Darrell's faith been betrayed—his love trampled upon? The thought gave me a sharp pang; yet, if it were so, it must have been long ago—twenty years. But such men as he are tenacious of affection; he might love the woman still, he might yet become reconciled to her. If it would make him happy—I drew a breath, and tried to banish the thought, and to think only of Nellie.

London was reached at last, and I took a hansom and drove to Kendon Street. I had purposely not written to warn Nellie of my impending arrival, for I wanted to surprise her, and I knew she would be at home at this time.

How strange I felt in this dingy street! How sordid and mean it looked after the majesty and beauty of the Chase; and somehow that seemed more like home than this, though Nellie was here and my heart was throbbing with the anticipated joy of meeting her! I glanced up at the second-floor windows as I jumped out of the cab, but no head appeared, though I saw a light shining through the blind, for it was by this time nearly dusk.

What a fuss the landlady made over me! My sister would be overjoyed. Yes, she was in, she hadn't had tea yet. Dear, dear, this was a surprise! I left the maid to bring my portmanteau, and ran lightly upstairs. Then I laid my hand very softly on our sitting-room door and opened it cautiously. Nellie was sitting at the further end of the apartment bending over some work, but the sound of the opening door, slight though it was, caught her ear, and she looked up eagerly.

"Vida!" The name was almost shrieked as my darling old Nell sprung up, scattering her work on to the floor, and threw her arms round me. For two or three minutes we were neither of us very coherent; then I briefly explained.

"Mr. Darrell found out you were going away, and when, and he made me come up to spend a week with you—a whole week, Nell! Isn't he a broth of a boy?"

"A week?" cried Nell. "Oh, Vida, he's the dearest jewel alive!"

"By the way, Nell," I added, "he sent kind greetings to you. He said he would if he knew you, which he hoped to do some day, so I asked him if he wouldn't send greetings as it was, and he agreed!"

"How good of him!" exclaimed Nellie, flushing with pleasure. "I say, Vida, that Mr. Darrell of yours must be awfully nice."

"He is," I agree, rummaging in the portmanteau, which Mrs. Miller had brought up, for my shoes.

"It is so kind," pursued Nellie, "to send a message to me, whom he has not seen."

"Nobody could be nicer every way," I declared enthusiastically. "He often asks after you, Nell. Now let we look at you."

I twisted her about, admired her new gown, and pronounced her "sweeter than ever, if that were possible." Then we sat down side by side, and had a pleasant chat until the tea was brought in.

How our tongues rattled on that evening! I told Nellie the story of Guinevere, and made her shudder over it; and I told her many other things, though some I kept back; but I informed her of Mr. Darrell's generosity that morning.

"That sort of thing is so particularly nice," she remarked; "because people who have never known poverty so seldom imagine that others may be 'hard up' for a few pounds."

She, on her side, had naturally not much news to tell, as she had not seen any of the people with whom she was to live; so I presently asked what was going on in the shape of amusements, for we must go to a theater or two. We picked out two plays that might prove entertaining, and decided that we would go down to the Strand the next day and book seats—these theaters were to be my treats, as well as sundry other "Cockney trips" I suggested.

"You are a regular Paddy!" laughed Nellie. "So soon as you have got money you want to spend it. I don't need to go anywhere, it's quite enough to have you."

"And I find it enough to have you, Nell; but a few harmless dissipations won't hurt you. Oh, by the bye, we'll have some boating."

So one day we took the train to Maidenhead, and had a long day on the river; we were both good scullers, and we pulled up above Marlow, had tea at the "Anglers" on the return trip, and dropped down in the golden evening light to Maidenhead.

We had splendid weather all that week, and the day after our river expedition we went to Richmond Park, returning to town in time for the theater in the evening. We were not easily tired out, we two lithe, healthy girls.

Nell was very fond of talking about Mr. Darrell, and asking questions concerning my life at Langton Chase, but she did not ask, as most sisters would have done, whether I knew anything more about him than I did when I first made his acquaintance; my Nellie was too honorable to pry into matters with which I might have inevitably become acquainted, but ought not to repeat.

The week soon flew by, and the sun rose at last on the day that was to see Nellie traveling to Llandwr and me to Langton Chase. Mrs. Miller wept at our departure, and hoped if ever we were in London again we would come to her; she would always be glad to see us. The room where we had been so happy looked dreary enough now with all our household gods gone—all the things that had brightened the dingy lodging and made it a home. I wondered, as I took a parting look round, whether we ever should be here again, and, if so, in what circumstances.

Once more Nellie and I were parted, but this time she was going to meet new experiences, and I was returning to scenes grown dear to me—to a place that had become more than a home to me.

CHAPTER X.

WHEN I entered the carriage at the London terminus the only other occupants were an old lady and gentleman who sat at the further end of the compartment; but, a minute or two before the train started, another passenger, a woman, entered the carriage and sat down nearly opposite to me. I glanced at her instinctively, and that first glance gave an impression that subsequent inspection only confirmed and deepened. The woman was an object of pity even more than of contempt, for she was a lady—yes, she was certainly a lady, but as certainly one who had fallen from her high estate—a drunkard, and, if worse there be, worse even than that. Her age it would have been almost impossible to decide. She looked aged, but not old—aged by vice, not by years. Perhaps she was not much over thirty, though fifty would be as likely a guess. Her figure was tall and thin to emaciation, her face retained traces of considerable beauty, her cheeks were coarsely rouged, and apparently by an unsteady hand, for the color was not even equally disposed; her hair was dyed and frizzed; on her head she wore a yellow bonnet of shabby lace, decked with bright flowers; the rest of her apparel was in keeping with her head-gear, shabby and faded, but with bits of cheap lace at the sleeves—dirty lace, I noticed, and a gay ribbon at the throat. She wore her clothes, too, as if they had been put on “anyhow.” No wonder—one had only to look at her eyes, the puffy and pallid skin, mark the trembling of the hands—slight though it was—to see that she was one of those hapless beings who are rarely—if ever—quite sober. She was not now; she sat with her eyes half closed, in a state of semi-stupor.

Presently I took out a paper and began to read. We were some way out of London now, and the woman opposite to me had not moved. Suddenly however she lifted herself, and, opening her eyes, stared about her in a half-bewildered manner, then, with a short laugh, she sunk back again as if recollecting herself, and stared hard at me for a few moments. Having apparently satisfied herself by this scrutiny, she addressed me.

“I suppose,” she said, “this is the right train for Bannermore?”

The station she named was two stations short of Durnford. “Yes, this is the right train,” I answered.

“You’re sure it stops there?”

“Quite sure. I heard another lady asking for Bannermore, and the guard told her it was right.”

“Thanks.” And she relapsed into silence.

She did not speak again during the remaining three hours and a half that elapsed before the train stopped at Bannermore. Then she got out of the carriage and walked across the platform with a steadier step than I should have expected to see; I felt sure though, by her manner, that she was a stranger to the place.

My other two traveling companions had alighted long since, and now I was alone. I leaned back and gave myself up to delicious

reverie. In little more than an hour I should be at Langton Chase. How would Mr. Darrell receive me? Would he be glad to see me? I thought of his parting words—were they not always in my heart? —and felt the hot color flush my cheeks. Yes, I think he would be glad, though not, perhaps, as much as I should be to see him again.

The train reached Durnford about three o'clock, and there was the old groom, James, on the platform, and the dog-cart waiting outside the station.

"Here I am, safe and sound, James," I said, as I gave him my hand at the carriage door and sprung out.

"And main glad I am you are back, miss," responded the old man heartily; and I at once took my seat in the dog-cart.

I enjoyed the drive through the dear familiar lanes in the glorious sunshine, and yet it seemed over long. At length we turned into the park, and soon after the gray old turrets and noble terraces I loved so well came into full view, and we passed under the time-worn Gothic archway. The house door stood open, and there was Mr. Darrell coming down the steps to help me down from the dog-cart.

It was a very bright smile he gave me as he took my hand and said—"Welcome back to Langton, Miss Verona."

Then he led me into the hall, and Mrs. Ellis came forward, and said how pleased she was to see me again, and hoped I had enjoyed my visit.

"Will you have some tea brought up to your room," Mr. Darrell asked; "or will you have it with me in the library when you are ready?"

I knew which he would prefer, and so I answered—"I would rather have it in the library;" and then I ran up to my room to divest myself of my traveling costume.

Yes, undoubtedly he was glad to see me, I knew by his smile and the look in his eyes when they met mine; but of course he would be careful and reserved before the servants. He never even used my Christian name when any of them were within hearing. I put on my antique black satin, and I was longer over my toilet than I need have been. I longed to go down to the library, and yet—inexplicable human heart!—I put off that which I most desired to do. Having completed my toilet, I went down more slowly than usual, and my hand trembled as I laid it on the handle of the library door, but I opened it boldly and entered.

Mr. Darrell was standing near the hearth, and as he turned his face quickly toward me I saw that it was calm no longer, but alight with a passionate joy that he made no attempt to conceal. Instead of coming to meet me with outstretched hands, as I had imagined he would, he made a step forward and opened his arms.

Did my heart almost cease beating, and my brain grow dizzy? Ought I to have drawn back—rushed from the room? How can I tell what I felt in that moment? How could I think it all—much less think of what was right or proper, or anything else? I know not what I ought to have done, I know only what I did do. I know only that I obeyed the look and action that said "Come!" and Ber-

tram Darrell took me in his strong arms and pressed me to his heart, and bowed down his head on mine, with passionate broken words.

"My darling, my darling! Oh, Vida, the time has been so long without you! You must bear with me, you must not shrink from me yet! So!"—folding me closer and closer, and I could feel the fierce throbs of his heart against mine, which beat so wildly too. "Let me hold you in my arms a little while, dearest! I can not give you up yet!"

After a few moments he tried to make me look up, and at length, with gentle force, lifted my flushed face to his. He must have read my heart in the one fleeting look I gave him, for he stooped and pressed his trembling lips to mine in a long passionate kiss; he held me to him as if I were some treasure he could not keep, and knew not how to part with; there was something like despair in the way he clasped me to him. I felt this vaguely, even then.

"My own Vida," he murmured at last; "how am I to let you go? Bear with me a little. If you love me, darling, you can forgive me!"

His words perplexed me. I hid my face on his breast, and faltered—

"Why—why need I forgive you?"

He did not answer, but strained me closer to him for a moment, and I could feel that he was drawing his breath in quick throbs.

"Don't ask me to-night," he said hoarsely; "let me have a few hours more of bliss. Heaven knows I could not help loving you, my darling."

What did he mean? Was he bound—pledged? Had he no right to love me? I lifted my eyes to his in an agony of appeal, and his flashed as he answered vehemently the unuttered words.

"Ay, I have a right to love you, and you to love me, Vida. There is no sin, dearest, in giving me your heart. I will keep back nothing from you, Vida; but trust me still, for a little time. You must not leave me yet;" and then he released me.

I went to the little table and made the tea, and we neither of us spoke a word, and Mr. Darrell did not touch the tea I gave him. Then I went to my room till dinner-time.

I came down quite calm, outwardly, and we talked just as usual, he asking me about my holiday in London, and I telling him what Nellie and I had done, and where we had been; and then he told me he had plenty of work for me on the morrow. Even during dessert, when the servant had withdrawn, there was no change; but when I was about to quit the room, and he rose to open the door for me, he stopped me.

"Are you going to desert me this evening?" he asked.

I hesitated, alternately flushing and turning pale.

"I was going to the library," I answered; "but—"

"You must do as you think best, my child," he said softly.

"Oh, no, no!" I cried impetuously. "I will do what you wish—I could not want to do otherwise."

He smiled, told me to go to the library, and said he would follow presently.

I went and sat on one of the settles, and hid my face in my hands; but I had little time for self-communing, for in about ten minutes

the door opened, and Mr. Darrell entered. He came and sat down by my side, and drew me to his breast.

"I did not dare to think you loved me, my Vida, till I saw the look in your eyes to day. Somehow it seems, even now, that it can not be true. Look into my eyes, Vida, and say you love me!"

I put my arms about his neck, and looked into his eyes; but my tongue failed me, with that impassioned gaze on mine; the hot blood rushed to my brow; I laid my cheek on his, and whispered tremulously—"I love you!"

And then his lips met mine again, and there was silence between us.

"You don't know, Vida, how hard it was to part with you," Bertram said presently; "and the days dragged so cruelly while you were away. How precious were the few lines I had from you yesterday! I kissed them a dozen times, my darling!"

"I wish I had not gone," I said remorsefully; "I wanted you to let me stay."

"But I thought you would be happier with your sister, Vida. And you would rather have stayed with me?"

"Yes," I whispered, "but I did not know then that—that—"

"That you loved me, Vida?"

"No; or that you cared so much for me. I was very happy with Nell—but oh, I could not help being happier with you!"

A half smile flitted across his face.

"Nay, my darling, you could not help it, indeed. I was almost jealous of your Nellie; but I know now that there is no cause. Ah, Vida, Vida—what have my studies taught me!"

"How do you mean?"

"They have taught me that no knowledge of human nature will make a man much wiser where his own heart is concerned. I should have divined that there was peril in having such a lovely little witch as you to live in the same house with me, and be so much with me."

A sharp pang shot through my heart.

"Then you wish," I said impulsively, "that I had not come?"

"My precious love"—drawing my head down, and pressing it with fervent passion against his breast—"I can not wish that! You are the whole world to me, darling!"

"Forgive me!" I whispered penitently.

"Hush, Vida—it is I who need forgiveness. You are far more generous to me than I deserve. How is it that you learned to love me, my child?"

"I don't know." I paused; a hundred memories rushed confusedly on my mind, but I could not think calmly. "You must have taught me," I added, at length.

"Ay, truly!" I looked up fleetingly, and saw that he was smiling—he must have thought my answer somewhat naïve. "And I betrayed myself to you three or four times; but you—strange child that you are!—did not read my secret. It would have opened your eyes to your own heart if you had seen into mine."

"I was very blind and foolish," I said, coloring—recalling vividly enough those occasions to which he alluded; "but when I went away this time—" I stopped abruptly, and hid my face again.

"Yes? Did you understand me then? I forgot myself utterly at that moment, Vida; I had almost taken you in my arms, as I did when you came back; but, even as it was, I quite betrayed myself; my passion overreached me; I could not help kissing your hands, and saying what I did."

"But I did not understand," I whispered, "not fully—I was startled—and—oh, I can't put it into words—I was so happy—and—I knew—afterward—that you would be glad to see me back—but it was only to-day I knew—all!"

He strained me to his heart; and we spoke no more until the time came for me to go to my room, and then he kissed me fondly, and bade me good-night.

It was broad daylight before I slept, and then I was awake again at six o'clock. Heart and brain were far too excited for slumber. I was happy—divinely happy—and yet there was a dark cloud across the sunshine of my joy. Bertram Darrell loved me, and yet, when he confessed his love, he had not asked me to be his wife—there was something more that he had to tell me; it was that which must part us—that which, I felt sure, had made him first an exile and then a recluse. It could not be any sin of his; was it, then, that he was already tied—that he had a wife living?

Married! Bertram Darrell married! But it could not be, unless the marriage were a secret one, for in the "County Families" there was no mention of his marriage. I had not heard any allusion in the house to his wife; Mrs. Ellis, I remember, once said what a pity it was her master had remained single all his life—the estates would go to a cousin. The idea of a secret marriage was too absurd.

Mr. Darrell was already in the breakfast-room when I came downstairs. I thought he looked haggard and anxious, despite the light that flashed into his face as I entered. He rose and came forward, and, drawing me to him, kissed me; but his eyes searched mine wistfully, and he sighed as he released me. He talked very little at breakfast, and, when it was over, he said—

"I must go up to town to-day, Vida—almost immediately; but I shall be back to-night, though very late. There is a train that reaches Durnford about half-past one in the morning; I shall probably come by that."

"Very well," I responded quietly. "Won't you have the dog-cart to meet you?"

"No, dear—I never do when I come at that hour. I like the walk, and there is no need to keep the groom out of bed. I will come and say good-bye to you before I go."

I went to the library, and began to look over my letters, though I had hard work to fix my attention upon what I was about. I had a vague feeling of impending evil, and a dread of the long day and evening without Bertram Darrell, which could not be accounted for only by the natural desire to have him with me.

In about ten minutes he entered the room, and, coming up to me, drew me to him, and gazed down into my face with a world of love in his. I put up my hands, and clung to him in a kind of terror that I could not control.

"What is the matter, dearest?" he asked tenderly, but with some wonder in his tone.

But I only clung the more tightly, and my eyes filled with tears. I had no reason to give, and I was vexed with myself for my folly.

"What is it, darling?" he repeated, still more tenderly, and he knelt down by me, and drew me close to him. "Come—tell me what troubles you?"

"You will think me so foolish," I whispered tremulously; "and indeed I think I am myself. I feel nervous—I don't know why—I can give no reason."

"I shall never think you foolish, sweetheart. Are you nervous about my going?"

"N-no—not that, exactly; but never mind me," I added, trying to smile—"I am an Irishwoman, so you must expect me to have strange fancies sometimes."

"You are not given to 'fancies,' dear child—Irishwoman though you are. Heaven knows I wish I could stay with you; but I can not well put off the business that takes me away, and we shall meet again to-morrow."

With these words he kissed me, and left; and, though I felt more comforted, I had still that vague foreboding in my heart.

I worked till six o'clock, and then I wrote a letter to Nellie, telling her of my safe arrival at Langton Chase, but not mentioning a word of what had passed between Bertram Darrell and myself. I got through dinner quickly—for I was beginning to feel restless—that I must go out—walk about—do something to shake off that morbid dread of evil that had come over me. Karl, whose huge form was stretched on the carpet by my side, looked up and laid back his ears, as if he divined what was passing in my mind, and anticipated a run in the park.

"Come," I said, springing up—"we will go out, old boy!"

It was nearly dark by this time, but fine and mild. I ran through the open window, down the terrace steps, and across the lawn. The mass of trees on the other side looked gloomy enough in the autumn gloaming, but somehow I did not feel afraid with Karl by my side. But, when deep among the trees, a new sensation began to creep over me. It was so very black here, so "eerie," yet I felt ashamed of myself, and did not like to turn back. I went on slowly for some time, then I paused suddenly—my heart seeming to throb in my throat. The thought of Lady Guinevere came upon me with a sudden rush of memory. I had all but forgotten in the last twenty-four hours the story that had taken such a hold upon me; that other story Bertram Darrell had told me had driven out everything but its own sweetness; but now, among the black shadows of the trees, with now and then a ripple and whisper among the leaves, I thought of the banshee.

As I stood still, irresolute whether to turn back or to proceed, I remembered, with an indescribable thrill, that I was close to the shrubbery, but how close I did not exactly know. I had not pursued a straight path, and in the darkness had lost my bearings. I could not stay here—I must get back to the house by some means, and as quickly as possible.

I turned and retraced my steps, and suddenly found myself in a broad grassy path, bordered on either side by trees and shrubs. I hurried on—I was going in the right direction, wherever I was.

Suddenly, Karl, who was a few steps in advance of me, stopped abruptly, and emitted a low growl. I stopped too, but I saw, with indescribable horror, that the animal's demeanor indicated, not wrath, but terror. He stood with his head stretched forward, as though gazing intently on some object straight before him, which was, as yet, invisible to me; but his hind legs were gathered under him—his tail, almost between them, gave a nervous twitch, his body trembled violently.

No creature of flesh and blood could have inspired the brave dog with this terror, I was sure. What could it be? The blood seemed to freeze in my veins—my mouth felt in that second as parched as if I had been days without water. My eyes strove vainly to pierce the gloom; I could see nothing, but I had not the power to stir from where I was.

I remembered afterward that in the agony of my terror I whispered, "Bertram, Bertram!" as if the loved name were a talisman, but beyond that I had only one thought—of Guinevere.

Ah, what was that? Karl crouched lower still, and uttered a strange sound between a growl and a muffled howl. Something white and filmy seemed to be fitting to and fro among the trees a little way before me. As I watched it, it seemed to take shape. The white cloud was female drapery, there was hair hanging down and waving to and fro with the motion of the raiment.

It was coming nearer to me, this form that I could scarcely discern; but I could not move. It passed out from the deep shadow of the trees, and stood before me—not ten feet away—a tall, slim female form, clothed in white, with long yellow hair, and it wrung its hands as if in extremest woe. The features I could not discern in the gloom, but I knew it was the banshee that I saw, and, strange as it may seem, I was far less terrified now than I had been the minute before. Even the supreme fear of the supernatural was neutralized by another fear—fear for the man I loved—to whom this awful presence in which I stood portended death or disaster. Love was stronger than the terror of the unearthly.

Drops of agony were on my brow. How long was it—minutes or hours—that I gazed on that dim shadowy form, ere slowly it faded before my eyes—growing undefined and misty, till it seemed to melt into the surrounding darkness?

I never knew how I escaped from that spot, whether I ran, walked, or what I did. The first thing I remember at all clearly, was standing by the terrace steps opposite to the drawing-room window, clinging for support, and thinking, in a confused way, that I must not let any one but Bertram Darrell know what I had seen, and that, at this moment, he might be in deadly peril. Karl was beside me, whining and licking my hands frantically, but I gave no heed to him; I was only muttering, with white parched lips—"Oh, Heaven, save him—save him from all evil!"

After a while I crept into the house, and up to my own room—Karl following me. I was glad to have him with me—I dared not be alone. I poured out some water and drank it eagerly. Then I fell upon my knees and prayed—prayed with an agony of supplication—for my darling.

When at length I arose, I felt somewhat comforted; but, alas!

that comfort was not enduring. With the fatal ingenuity of a vivid imagination and intense love, I tortured myself with a hundred terrors. I had seen the maiden whose appearance portended evil to the house of Darrell. What might not happen to my lover to-night? I remembered the vague foreboding that had made me so cling to him when he left me. I might never see him again; the train he traveled in might be wrecked; he might be attacked on the road between Durnford and the Chase.

I tried to shake off the hideous terrors that oppressed me; but how could I? I was not of the calm equable temperament that can endure suspense, or the unimaginative, which adds no self-inflicted tortures to the misery it must suffer; nor could I cast aside as a fancy what I had seen in the shrubbery. To me it was no vision, but a palpable reality, a solemn warning of death or disaster to the man I loved. I was alone, too; I dared not, if I would, seek sympathy. I must endure these long hours with no living creature near me but the faithful hound; I must bear unaided the intolerable load of anxiety.

I went down to the library. I could not remain long in one spot. I paced up and down wildly, locking and unlocking my hands, clasping them over my head, pressing them to my heart—I felt half mad. I could do nothing but wait, wait!

I must have walked miles that night, but I felt no fatigue—my mental excitement was too great for bodily fatigue. Sometimes I stopped in my restless walk to listen—I would hardly acknowledge to myself what I listened for—for hurrying footsteps—for the clatter of horses' hoofs—some one coming with news—terrible news of a collision on the railway. Two or three times I went out on to the terrace; but all was still as death; there was not a sound—scarcely even the whisper of a breeze among the trees. How dark it was! Did Bertram Darrell carry fire-arms when he came through those lonely lanes in the small hours of the morning?

I could not stay in the library until he should come home. None of the servants, I knew, would sit up; but still I had been late one night before, I did not want them to think that I waited for my employer. They knew that at eleven o'clock I retired to my room, and sometimes the house-maid, Annie, who usually attended to my rooms, was as late as that, and would tap at the door to ask me if I required anything.

So at eleven o'clock I went up to my room; but I had no thought of going to bed. I took off my dress only, and put on a loose dressing-robe of crimson flannel, and, when I felt sure that Annie must have retired for the night, I set the sitting-room door a little ajar, that I might the better hear the library door open, if Bertram Darrell came home. He was sure to go first to the library.

Karl had followed me upstairs, and lay for the most part on the floor with his nose between his fore-paws, and his great eyes watching me wistfully. He was evidently puzzled by my restlessness, which seemed at times to infect him, for he would go to the door and listen, and look back at me, wagging his tail as if aware that I was watching for some one. I did not lie down to rest, for I knew that in my present state of agitation and excitement sleep would not come to me. Often I went to the door, often out into the gal-

Iery, long before the train could have reached Durnford; and Mr. Darrell could not possibly be back until nearly a quarter to three, even if the train arrived punctually at half-past one. I counted every quarter, and, when it was nearly half-past two, suspense became again a poignant agony. I went along the gallery and stood at the head of the stairs that descended into the hall upon which the library opened. I was sure to hear the door open from here, though if he went straight to his room I could not hear him—he need not pass by the library at all. What should I do then? I could only wait till the morning. There I stood, every sense strained to the utmost—my naturally keen hearing preternaturally sharpened. In the absolute stillness I fancied I could have heard the faintest sound in the hall below, which, from the winding of the stairs, I could not see. Karl was by my side, and listening also; he, too, was on the *qui vive*; he, too, was watching for his master, as I for mine. I had no feeling of nervousness, I, the only wakeful huinan being in this great house—I, who only this evening had been face to face with the supernatural. I did not once look back at the gloomy gallery behind me. I gazed down fearlessly at the wide stairway, winding away into darkness below. There was a light in the hall, but no ray from it was visible to me. I was alone in the darkness and silence.

The half-hour after two chimed from the great clock in the tower; he ought to be near home now. He was a good walker; I had heard him say that he often covered the six miles in little more than an hour, but he might not be walking so fast to-night. How the minutes dragged! I pressed my hands to my forehead, my brain was throbbing so madly. Oh, had he come home and passed on to his rooms, and I had not heard him—or was the train late? It must be nearly a quarter to three!

Hark—what was that? A step below—or was I, in my frantic anxiety, a prey to my own fancy? I bent forward. Heavens, how intently I listened! Karl ran down a few of the stairs and stopped, looking back. One moment of death-like silence, then a sound—was it—No, I was not mistaken, it was a door opening—the library door! With a short whine of delight Karl rushed down the stairs. For a few seconds my brain reeled with the sharp revulsion, a choking sob rose in my throat, and I clutched the balustrade for support. My weakness lasted only for a moment; the next I ran swiftly down-stairs, across the lighted hall, and pushed back the half-open library door.

“Vida!”

Bertram Darrell turned in amazement. Without word or cry, I sprung forward and threw myself upon his breast, clinging to him convulsively in an agony of joy, grief, and terror. I do not know what I did or what he said, his voice sounded far away; but I knew that his arms held me fast, that I was clinging about his neck; I felt his lips on my brow—and then—then I knew there was deep anxiety as well as wondrous tenderness in his voice; but he was asking no questions, only soothing me with soft, loving words. I struggled bravely for some degree of composure; I tried to speak, but only broken words would come.

“Safe—oh, thank Heaven, you are safe!”

"My darling, what has happened? Were you afraid for me? Have you been watching for me, my heart?"

"Watching!" I cried. "Oh, Heaven, I have watched all night!" —and then I burst into a fit of weeping.

He did not attempt to check my tears; it was good for me to weep like this.

When presently I grew calmer, he said gently—

"Can you speak to me now, my Vida? Have you been frightened?"

I felt a convulsive shudder go through me. I looked up at him in a new access of terror.

"You won't send me away from you," I exclaimed; "not yet—not to-night?"

"You shall stay with me here till daylight, my precious one. I will not loose you from my arms for one minute. No harm can come to you here, Vida."

"No, no; but it is not that—it is for you, for you I am afraid!"

"For me?" He spoke in a changed voice, bending down to look into my eyes; something in his tone, in the look that flashed into his eyes, the sudden settling of the lines of the firm mouth, seemed to anticipate my next words.

"I saw it," I cried brokenly, "to-night—the maiden—Guinevere!"

"Great Heaven!"

The exclamation broke from him in a hoarse whisper; but I knew by the sudden passion with which he strained me to his breast what thought it was that smote him with so fierce a pang. Was he to be struck through me? Was I to be the victim sacrificed that he might suffer?

The blow was so unexpected that for some moments he seemed like one stunned.

"Tell me, if you can," he said at length, "how it happened—what you saw."

I told him, speaking slowly, but steadily now, what had happened, and he listened without interrupting me, sternly controlling himself, I knew, for he was drawing his breath in heavy throbs, and his face wore that haggard look I had seen on it before. As I went on with my tale my lips grew parched and dry. He saw this, and stopped me.

"A moment," he interrupted gently, and he rose and went to a side-table, and poured out some water, which he brought to me. I drank it eagerly.

"How good you are to me!" I said gratefully.

"It is easy to be 'good' to those we love, Vida." He sat down again, and I continued—

"I saw her quite plainly—not her features, for it was too dark, but her form and her yellow hair, and I saw her wring her hands. It could not have been my imagination, either, for Karl saw something also."

"My darling, my own love!" Bertram Darrell whispered brokenly. "Would to Heaven I had been with you!"

"Don't grieve for me," I said pleadingly, and the color swept over my face as I remembered my talisman in that moment of terror;

but a strange shyness made my tongue falter. "There was something," I began, and stopped.

"What was it, Vida? Tell me," he said, bending down. I hid my face on his breast.

"I whispered—I whispered your name to myself," I answered, under my breath.

He did not speak—he was too deeply moved for words—but he kissed me with a deep reverence, as if this proof of my great love for him were something so infinitely beyond what he could have dared to hope that the knowledge gave him almost a sense of awe.

After a while I told him how I had passed the watches of that night. I confessed my wild fancies, my terrors; how I had tortured myself with terrible pictures of imaginary disasters, how at last I had stood at the stairhead listening for him.

"Was I foolish?" I asked him wistfully. "But, oh, I could not help it!"

"Foolish! Oh, Vida, Vida!" he cried passionately. "Are not the guilty punished through the innocent? Yes—no—no! For your sister's sake Heaven will have mercy on you; that blow will be spared to me! But the other—the other! Oh, one need not fear death, but that other would be worse than death—ten thousand times worse than death!"

I had never seen him so agitated; he seemed to speak wildly, incoherently, but I linked those words with something he had said yesterday, and they had a meaning for me. What followed confirmed that impression. He rose suddenly, and put me from him, and excitedly began to walk up and down, his eyes burning, his lips set as if with some inexorable resolve, his face deadly pale.

I watched him in agony, not daring to speak, yet longing to implore him to tell me what so troubled him—to offer him sympathy and consolation. Suddenly he paused and came over to me, taking both my hands in his and pressing them against his breast.

"You must not leave me," he said, looking down into my face, and speaking as one who commanded rather than implored. "I can not live without you; I will not live without you! You must stay with me, child!"

I looked up at him through blinding tears.

"Why should I leave you?" I asked. "I will not—unless you send me from you."

His face changed again—softened to exquisite tenderness.

"You do not know what you say, darling. Forgive me; I was mad just now. I am cruel to you, dear one; you are worn out and weary. You must go now"—pressing his lips to mine.

I went slowly up to my room. My lover had come back to me safe to-night; but the relief was, after all, only immediate and partial. What might not this day that was now dawning bring? I looked forward to it with infinite dread. How little did I dream in what manner the warning of the maiden Guinevere would be fulfilled!

CHAPTER XI.

I WENT about my work that day with a "boding fear" at my heart, which it was useless to grapple with. Mr. Darrell told me he would have less work done, as I must be tired and unstrung; but indeed I was too anxious to feel weary, and besides, as I told him, work was best for me. He admitted that, and let me have my own way. Once he came into the library and dictated to me a short article for a paper, and he was very pleased with the rapidity of my short-hand work. A little after this I had to go to his study to ask him about a letter which I feared I might not answer as he wished. I knocked at the door, and, in response to his "Come in," entered, to find him sitting by his writing-table, with papers strewn before him, but he did not seem to have been writing. He looked up as I came in, but even the smile that instantly came to eye and lip could not dispel the gloom that rested on his features.

"What is it, my child?" he asked, as I approached.

"This letter," I replied, pausing at his side. "I thought it best to come to you before I answered it—I am not quite sure about it."

He took the letter and glanced rapidly over it.

"I think, Vida, you need only acknowledge this, and let me have it again. I will see to it later on."

He drew me to him and kissed me, but he did not seek to detain me, and I naturally thought that the secret which I had yet to hear from him preyed on his mind. How ardently I wished that he would speak out, and make all clear between us!

At dinner he hardly uttered a word, and when I went up to the drawing-room I stepped through the window on to the terrace, and stood leaning my head on the balustrade, feeling unutterably miserable. It was a warm night for September, and there were a few stars in the sky, but no moon—a "brooding" night, that might end in a storm, and the night and my spirit were in harmony.

The sound of Bertram Darrell's steps behind me made me lift my head quickly. He came to my side and put his arm round me, and we stood together for some moments without speaking. I felt calmer and less desponding now that he was with me. I lifted my head from his shoulder, and tried to look into his face, but it was too dark to see it distinctly, even if it had not been a little averted. The movement, however, made him turn, and he stooped and pressed his lips to mine.

"Sweet comforter!" he said softly. When he spoke again, which was not for two or three minutes, it was to ask a question—a strange question, as it seemed to me at first, but I quickly learned its purport.

"You told me, Vida, when I first saw you, that you had no friend in the world but your sister?"

"Yes; I have no friends."

"And you have nothing to fall back upon if you should be out of employment?"

"No; nothing."

A quick sigh escaped him, and he pressed me closer to his breast.

"Vida, darling," he went on, his voice trembling as he spoke, "you must not mind what I am going to say—I want to say it now—because—I—I may not have any other opportunity. You know, dear one, this warning may be for me—you understand me, Vida? Hush, my heart's dearest—you must not weep!"

I strove bravely with my bitter tears, and choked them back—what could I not have strength to do for his sake?

"I can not put aside that possibility, Vida," he continued more steadily. "I must not; and if I could I would make your future secure—I would save you from the need of struggling with the world. Nay, my darling—"

But I could not keep silence—I broke out, with a passionate sob—

"No, no, no! I will not listen; if you love me, don't speak so!"

"My precious child! I speak so because I love you! Would you not, in my place, feel as I do? You can not bear to hear me talk of things that seem so worthless to you, since you love me; but Vida, is it not an added pang to me that I can do nothing for you—for your own dear sake? Yet I would not have it even cross your mind, that I had not thought of this. I may speak to you frankly, darling. You know what the world would say of you if you benefited in any way by my will. Here we live out of the world; it need never know that you lived under my roof. But the provisions of a will are known to all. I dare not give to you—you to whom I would gladly give all that I possess—enough to shield you from poverty. It is very, very bitter, Vida!"

"Not to me," I cried, sobbing. "Oh, not to me! I want nothing—nothing—only your love. You break my heart to talk of—of being taken from me. I am glad you can not do what you wish! Please don't speak of it again!"

"I will not, darling," he assented tenderly, "if it pains you so much. Look up and kiss me, Vida, in token of forgiveness."

"How can I forgive you," I whispered, "for thinking only of my welfare?" But I lifted my head, and he bent his face to mine, and, for the first time, I kissed him.

We did not move till it was time for me to leave him, and then he reluctantly released me, and I went from his side.

I had been some moments in my room when I remembered that I had left behind me a book I was reading, and which I wanted to finish that night. I ran down again, and entered the drawing-room, knowing that if Mr. Darrell were still on the terrace he could not hear me. I pushed aside the heavy *portière*, and was half-way across the floor, when I stopped abruptly—arrested by the sound of voices from the terrace; one was that of my lover, the other that of a woman!

I can honestly avow that the feeling which leaped into my heart at that moment was not jealousy, but fear—fear for the man I loved. Who was this woman with whom he spoke? At another time I should not have dreamed of connecting with a woman the idea of danger to a strong man's life; but now I feared—I knew not what. Death had come to men before now from mean and weak hands; had not women, smarting under real or fancied wrongs, shot or stabbed those who had wrought the evil? My heart stood

still with fear. I must not advance; I dared not fly and leave Bertram Darrell. I bent forward to listen—not to the words uttered, but to discover if the woman's voice betrayed hostility. I had heard my lover's tones just now—they were low and stern. Now the woman's voice replied again; and I started violently, for surely it was not quite unfamiliar. She spoke aloud, as if she did not care who heard her, and her intonation was insolent—defiant; so were her words, which reached my ear distinctly.

"I hope I have been seen; you know very well I want to be seen; if I hadn't caught sight of you on the terrace, I should have gone to the entrance and knocked or rung."

"Silence!" There was a stern and angry ring in Bertram Darrell's voice that I had never heard before. "Not one word more outside. Come within. I will speak to you there!"

Within! Another moment, and I should be discovered. Even had I had time to reach the door, I could not quit the room now. The woman had evidently come here for no good—she might mean murder. No, I would stay and watch, and listen. One quick glance around me showed me a hiding-place. I sprung to the conservatory entrance, and concealed myself behind a tall and luxuriant shrub, just within the arch. There I could both see and hear. Nothing but all-absorbing terror for this man's safety could have led me to an act so hateful; for no other motive could I have held it excusable. True, it might be that I was only anticipating what my lover's own lips would tell me, but I could wait till he spoke, or, if I thought he was reticent, I would tell him to his face that I had a right to know the truth. I would never discover anything by eavesdropping, except that which I sought to discover now.

They came in through the open window—these two—into the full blaze of the chandelier; Bertram Darrell and—great Heaven!—the woman who had traveled with me the other day—the dissolute, degraded woman in shabby finery, and who seemed even then hardly sober! What had such a woman as this to do with Bertram Darrell?

She was dressed the same as when I first saw her—the bonnet with the gaudy flowers, the tawdry lace, the gay ribbons here and there; but I noticed one or two recently made rents in her gown, and her shabby boots were very dusty, as if she had walked a long distance. She paused just within the room, and watched Bertram Darrell with a leer on her features, while he shut the windows and drew the heavy curtains; but, when he crossed the room to the anteroom and locked the door, she looked around her and nodded with a smile not pleasant to see, muttering something I could not catch. She was comparatively sober now, and she was evidently bent on mischief.

In a minute Bertram Darrell came back into the room. As he did so, I saw his face clearly, and the sight of that face was terrible. It was literally deathly white—even the lips were hueless; his teeth were firmly set, and there was an angry glitter in his dark eyes. I saw—I knew—that he had come face to face at last with the curse of his life, and that he did not mean to be vanquished. He was desperate—and he would take desperate measures. The woman, perhaps, could not see that, or did not understand the man with whom

she had to deal. As he approached her, she moved forward a little—no further than to a large *fauteuil*, in which she seated herself: and even in her manner of doing this there was the lingering relic of refined habits, though this was more painful than grotesque, in contrast with the hideous evidences of abandoned life so indelibly stamped on her face, mien and attire.

Bertram Darrell paused a few paces from her, leaning his hand on the piano. She spoke first, surveying him with the leer with which before she had watched his movements.

" You are very much changed," she said slowly, " in all these years; but I should have known you anywhere. Handsome people don't change out of recognition—unless they live as I do; and yet you knew me; so perhaps I have some of my good looks left, eh?"

He answered not a word, but stood motionless, looking at her. The woman gazed round the room again, and again nodded.

" A splendid room," she observed; " and a splendid old house this is! So I have found you out at last—after twenty-one years—isn't it? Yes—twenty-one years, and you are the head of an old and noble family—and have a grand old ancestral estate and any amount of money. That's fortunate for me!"

She leaned back in her chair and laughed a low sneering laugh, looking at the man before her from between her half-closed lids. She could flare out, I felt sure, into coarse fury; but for the moment there was no need for passion; she was mistress of the situation and she thoroughly enjoyed it; she was having fine sport with her victim, now she had caught him.

When she had done laughing—he standing motionless the while, without a change of countenance—she leaned forward, and, propping her elbows on her knees, began again.

" You haven't asked how I found you out? Well, I'll tell you. I came down to a place some miles from here—I forget the name—the other day. I had business there—never mind what, that's my concern. Well, I got wandering about, and, yesterday morning, I came near to Durnford. I was sitting in a field, by a lane, when I heard hoofs, and I looked through the hedge—and saw—you, my dear. ' So, ho,' thought I—' found at last, by chance! Luck always comes that way.' There was a man standing by a gate and I saw him touch his hat to you—one of your tenants, eh? So I asked him the name of the man who had just ridden by. ' Mr. Darrell, of Langton Chase,' he says. So I asked him several questions—how long you'd lived here, whether you were married, and so on; and he answered them all. But I told him nothing—not yet! So I watched my opportunity and crept in through the park—and here I am, and here I mean to remain until you turn me out by force."

She leaned back once more, and looked at him defiantly. Still not a word fell from Bertram Darrell. His silence seemed to irritate her; she leaned forward, with a rougher movement this time, and an angry flush rose to her rouged cheek.

" It was a scurvy trick you played me!" she went on. " And all these years"—she ground her teeth—" you have been laughing in your sleeve at my threat; for, after all, it wasn't your name I dragged in the dust. You lied to me; and I'll have full measure of revenge for that! I know now who you are, and all the world shall

know who I am, and what a credit I am to your noble name." Her wrath was rising rapidly—her voice grew shrill and unsteady. "I'm very well known in the police-courts already, but under the wrong name. They shall know the right one now! Your servants, your tenants shall know who I am—I will degrade you at last—drag you through the mire. Don't think to buy me off. It wouldn't be any good if you did; if I didn't tell the truth on purpose, I should let it out when I'd been drinking. So now you know what you've got to expect. It's a pleasant prospect, isn't it?"

It was clear that this woman was Bertram Darrell's wife—clear that he had married her under a false name, and that for over twenty years he had succeeded in evading her. He had denied nothing. She had the power, and she meant to make a frightful use of it; and he was helpless—helpless in the hands of a shameless, debased woman—his wife, his wife!

He spoke now for the first time—spoke calmly and quietly.

"I have certainly," he said, "no intention of turning you out by force to-night. The servants are gone to bed, and you must wait until to-morrow for the opportunity of making a scene before them. You can stay here to-night, if you choose."

"You're condescending"—returning to the sneering tone. "Of course I choose. By the way, I suppose you don't live here alone?"

She cast her eyes around again—seeking, I know, for signs of feminine presence; but there were none.

"I told you that you could stay here to-night," Mr. Darrell answered. "If you wish to do so, follow me, and I will show you the room you can occupy."

"I'll come when I please," the woman responded insolently. "You shirk my question, I see. However, I'll soon find that out. Have you told her how happily married you were? Ha, ha! I say, I'm not going yet—not till I've had something—you've got plenty—never fear! I'll have some choice wine. One doesn't get much of that now, I used to, though!"

Was there no shame left in this awful travesty of womanhood?

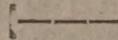
"I don't keep wine in the drawing-room," Bertram Darrell said, in the same passionless manner. "If you want it, you can come with me."

She rose with some alacrity—her eyes gleaming.

"Yes, I'll come with you," she responded, "and watch you—you might poison the wine."

"The wine is poison enough," he said grimly, turning toward the door; and there was a curious flash in his eyes that I remembered afterward. "Come."

They crossed the room. He held aside the *portière* for her to pass out; it fell behind them, and I was alone.



CHAPTER XII.

I WAS stunned; all my faculties seemed paralyzed. One idea I grasped, and but for that I should have had no power to stir from where I stood. I must by some means get away unobserved to my own rooms. I must not be found here in the morning by the serv-

ants. But, when I moved, I found I could not walk steadily; the room swam around me. I felt suffocated; I could not breathe without difficulty; I stood still for a moment, clutching at a chair to support myself, and presently I felt able to crawl a little further, and so by degrees I gained the staircase outside. A window here was open, and the fresh air revived me somewhat. I crept along, trembling, panting, holding on by the balusters, halting every now and then; but I must not give way yet. I reached my room at last, entered, closed the door, and then I fell to the floor in a dead swoon.

I must have lain insensible fully an hour, for, when consciousness returned I heard the clock chiming four quarters, and then came one heavy stroke. I staggered to my feet, and sunk into the arm-chair where I had often sat reading. My limbs felt stiff and numb; but activity came all too soon to brain and heart.

His wife! This, then, was the fulfillment of the warning—this blight and dishonor, worse than a thousand deaths! Was this thing to happen? Would he suffer it? Would he allow his spotless name to be dragged through the mire of the streets—to be a jest in gin palaces, a by-word in police-courts? This was what he had to tell me—that he had a wife living—a wife who drank, a degraded creature—Heaven help him? No wonder he shrunk from the hideous recital; and he thought, too, that I would leave him, when I knew the truth.

Leave him! I sprung to my feet, and my hand was on the door-handle. Leave him now, when he was crushed to the earth—now, in his shame and misery, when the world would know his dishonor! Oh, he could not so misjudge me! Leave him now? No.

But with my hand on the door I paused. Not that my resolve faltered; but to-morrow I must go to Bertram Darrell—not to-night. For his sake, more than for my own, I shrunk from needlessly exciting the suspicions of the servants—the still more-to-be-dreaded chance of meeting the woman who had come here to-night. Besides, he might not even be in his study.

I turned from the door and sunk back into the chair again, covering my face with my hands. I had never dreamed of this—this truth, so horrible that even now it seemed as if it could not be. I had thought of a wife selfish, unloving, whose levity had forced him to leave her; but this degraded object continually dragged before police-courts; this—Bertram Darrell's wife!

And for twenty-one years he had borne this horrible burden! His dream must have been a brief one; he must have found out very quickly that the idol was of the poorest clay indeed.

And to-morrow would bring disgrace upon his name. I had questioned almost fiercely—"Would he suffer it?" but I knew not how he could avert the impending blow.

The morning dawned at last—a golden autumn morning. I opened the window and let in the fresh pure air, for I must look very different from the reflection I met in the mirror before I could venture to be seen by the servants. I had a cream-white dress that Bertram Darrell was very fond of, so I put that on, thinking it would help to light up my features and aid me in appearing as if nothing had happened. I even put a flower into the bosom of my gown to heighten the effect.

I was racked with anxiety, but I dared not leave my room before the usual time. Was anything known yet? That was not likely. I felt sure that Bertram Darrell had taken care to give his wretched wife so much wine that there would be little danger of her being about early this morning. I knew if there was any danger of my meeting her he would manage to let me know.

I schooled myself before I went down to the breakfast-room, and exerted all the strength of my strong will to seem like my usual self, and I felt, as I passed down-stairs that I had succeeded. Yet my hand trembled as I laid it on the breakfast-room door. I paused a moment, then turned the handle firmly and went in.

Mr. Darrell was sitting near the window, reading. He laid down his book and rose to meet me, and I saw then a curious worried look on his face, and his lips were still almost bloodless. He seemed constrained if not cold. He took my hand for a moment and said "Good-morning, my child," and instantly turned away, not seeing, or not seeming to see, the flush that rose to my cheek, the pain in my eyes.

I stooped over Hubert, glad to hide my face from the servant who just then entered with the coffee and letters. There was one for me, from Nellie. I put it aside, I had not even the wish to read it yet. I took my place at the table and poured out the coffee. Mr. Darrell, opposite to me, was absorbed and reticent, but I felt his keen penetrating gaze on me more than once. I noticed that he ate nothing, and drank only a little coffee. Surely he would presently tell me the truth; he must see that I knew something. If he remained silent, then I must speak to him and tell him what I had seen and heard last night.

Gladly I rose at length to go to the library. There were a number of letters by my employer's plate this morning, as usual. Often he would give me some of the letters to take with me and would bring others to me later. To-day he had not opened one letter, and when I rose from the table he did not move. I could not leave him like this, with the feeling that I knew something of the reason for his strange treatment of me, and acquiesced in it. I paused, my heart throbbing suffocatingly; then I went round to him resolutely and stood by his chair.

"Shall I take any of the letters?" I asked.

"No," he replied, without looking at me; "I will bring them to you by and by."

"Don't speak to me like that!" I broke out impetuously. "Why do you treat me so strangely to-day?"

The blood rushed to his brow; he half rose, and sunk back into his chair again, with a smothered groan.

"Vida," he said, in a suppressed tone, "leave me now; I have something to say to you presently, and I need all my strength. You must not unnerve me."

"Come to me soon!" I returned hoarsely. "I can not bear suspense; you are wronging me—misunderstanding me!"

"Vida!"

"Yes, it is true. You think—no, I will not speak here. But come soon."

I waited for no more, but turned to the door and hurried to the library.

It was not time yet to commence work, and if it had been I was in no state to do it; I could not have held a pen for the trembling of my hands. I restlessly paced up and down the room, impatiently awaiting Bertram. Truly my temperament was not a calm or an equable one.

Twice I had almost said aloud, "Will he never come! Oh, will he never come?" And yet not many minutes had passed before the door opened and Bertram Darrell came in. I stopped in my wild walk, and he paused near the table. He spoke first, low and steadily, but not looking at me; it wrung my heart to see him bear himself thus, as though by his silence he had wronged me.

"I meant to have spoken to you to-day, Vida. I should have done so before this; I make no excuse for the delay, except this—that I could not face parting from you. It may seem to you now that the truth is forced from me—only I know that you will not doubt my word when I tell you I should have confessed everything to you to-day. I think you know something of last night—"

"Yes; I know more—much more than you dream of!" I said passionately, with broken voice and hurried speech, my hands clasped, my lips quivering. "Don't blame me for what I did—it was my fear for you that kept me where I was. I came back to the drawing-room last night for a book I had left, and then I heard voices—her voice and yours. I would have gone away then, but I dared not. I thought of the warning, and I feared for your safety. This woman might try to take your life; think me foolish if you will, but do not think that I tried to discover what you did not choose to tell me. I hid in the conservatory, and then you came into the room, and I heard and saw all that passed."

He was looking at me now, with intense agony in his eyes.

"Do you know," he said hoarsely, "what this woman is who stands between us?"

"Yes—I know what she is. I saw her before last night—she was in the carriage with me coming down. I saw then what she was. I looked at her with horror and pity for her degradation. I never dreamed that she was your wife. Oh, Heaven, that this bitter misery should be yours! Bertram"—I stretched out my hands to him—scarcely able to see his face through my blinding tears—"do not thrust me from you!"

But even then he resisted me—resisted the wild pleadings of his own heart, and turned from me with an agonized cry, saying—"Child, you tempt me beyond my strength!" Then he staggered back into a chair, and hid his face in his hands.

I went and knelt by his side, and tried to draw his hands away, whispering brokenly—

"Bertram, Bertram, you can not put me away from you!"

Then he looked up, lifted my face, and put back the hair from my brow, gazing into my eyes with the very anguish of love in his own.

"Vida," he said huskily, "you can stay with me if you will; no one, except ourselves, need ever know that I have a wife living.

These walls shall keep my secret; the world will never hear it from her lips."

What did he mean? I gazed at him in wonder; his eyes were glittering—his lips set; every feature was stamped with inexorable resolve. My veins thrilled. What had he done? What did he intend doing?

"Bertram," I exclaimed—"Bertram!"

For answer he put me gently from him, and rose. I leaned against the chair he had just vacated; my brain was bewildered, yet I watched him, as he paced up and down the room. Presently he paused, and looked at me.

"Vida," he said, "do you doubt me? But no—that can not be!" He came to me and placed his hands on my shoulders, looking down into my face. "Judge, Vida," he continued, "whether I am justified in what I have done; whether Heaven will hold me guiltless in defending my honor against so vile a woman—a woman who, simply for revenge, would drag my name in the mire. You heard what she threatened last night; she would carry out her threat to the letter; but from the moment I saw her come up the terrace steps I resolved that she should never leave this house till she left it for her grave. You do not shrink, or even start. No—you could not deem me capable of the thought of murder. She will live under my roof, but only as a prisoner. When I left the drawing-room with her last night, I led her to a room in the corridor leading to the west wing. I gave her wine—partially drugged—till she was stupefied; and it was easy then to take her into the west wing, and place her in one of the inner chambers. No sound from that room will ever penetrate to the rest of the house, or be heard from without. I will give to that wretched woman who has blighted my life every comfort; she shall want for nothing; I will not even deprive her too abruptly of the drink that has been her curse, lest I should shorten her life; I will be the more scrupulous because—Heaven forgive me!—I know that I desire her death. But she shall never be a free woman again, unless, Vida--unless your lips give her freedom."

He dropped his hands, and turned from me, resuming his walk up and down the room. I stood still—scarcely breathing. Bertram Darrell, then, had placed his honor in my hands; had left with me the decision whether his wife was to remain a prisoner in his house—a secret captive—hidden from all the world, save us two, or to go forth free, to proclaim his dishonor from the housetops.

Could I judge fairly—I who loved him? For some minutes I could not think coherently; I could only stand there and watch the tall form walking steadily to and fro; but gradually my brain grew clearer—calmer; I was able to examine the case before me dispassionately, as though I had no personal concern or interest in it. Would a man be wrong to use his power as Bertram Darrell had done? Has any human being a right to suppress the liberty of a fellow-creature, unless he acts by the law of the land? The answer to that question was emphatically—"Yes." Only a fearful extremity can justify such action; and that fearful extremity existed here. The law was powerless; and there are wrongs which the law can not—or does not—reach, and in those cases I hold that individuals

may be justified—each case being dealt with on its merits—in taking the law into their own hands.

Here was a woman, utterly abandoned, who vowed that she would do an irreparable injury to a man who had wrought her no evil. He had no power to restrain her, except by depriving her of her liberty; he did not intend to treat her with harshness or neglect; on the contrary, she would have much better care than in her life of mingled excess and hardship. Had not this man a right to defend his honor, the stainless name of his house, from degradation? A thousand times—yes. As Bertram Darrell had done, so would I, in his place, have done also. I felt that in this I was not biased by my love for him; I felt that my conscience, and not my heart, was my guide, and that had my conscience pronounced him wrong, I would have had strength to say so.

I lifted my head, and half turned toward him; he paused in his walk.

"Well," he said gently, "what is the answer, Vida?"

"Why do you leave it to me?" I asked huskily. "Why not be your own guide in this?"

"Why?" he said, coming close to me. "Because I would be free from guilt in your eyes. My own conscience would acquit me; but, if yours condemned me, there could be no peace for me. I might believe you mistaken—but I must obey you!"

I stretched out my hands to him; he caught them in his own, and pressed them against his breast.

"You trust my judgment?" I said, looking up at him. "You believe that I would think only of the right and the wrong of the case—not of our love for each other—of your suffering?"

"Else I should not have placed my fate in your hands, Vida."

"Then," I said steadily, though my breath came fast, "let that woman remain a prisoner. It is not even a question of greater or lesser wrong. She would do you an injury; you do her none. You have a right to save your name from the dishonor she would bring upon it; you would have a right to keep her in captivity, had you no other motive than to save her from herself."

Without a word Bertram Darrell folded me to his heart, and for a long time we were silent. Both felt infinite relief from horrible calamity; both felt also a terrible sense of responsibility. In our hands, and in ours only, were the life and liberty of a fellow-creature; a responsibility the more onerous because that life was to both an incubus, because it stood between us like a black shadow; and yet I vowed a solemn vow in my heart that no care of mine should be lacking to prolong her days; for all Bertram Darrell's love could not suffice me, if neglect of mine should shorten by one hour the span of that unhappy woman's life.

I raised my head at length.

"Bertram," I whispered, "you have seen her since last night?"

"Yes," he said, with a shudder. "I saw her this morning. She was only partly awake—not enough to understand her position. I will go to her presently, and, if she is able to comprehend the truth, she shall know it. Vida"—he gazed down at me very wistfully—"am I laying upon you too heavy a burden?"

"No," I answered; "it is for your sake."

"Oh, child, would to Heaven I were more worthy of such love as yours! Come," he added, in an altered tone—"and, if you can bear to hear it now, let me tell you the story of my folly."

"Not now, Bertram, if you would rather not speak of it."

"I shall be happier when you know all, my darling. I want to have no secrets—no reservations from you."

And then, leading me to a seat, he told me the story of his blighted life.

CHAPTER XIII.

"I DON'T think," began Bertram Darrell, "that mine was a very happy youth. I was an only son; my mother I scarcely remember, for I was barely two years old when she died, and my father died before I was ten. He was kind to me in his way, but his sympathies were not keen, and to love and be loved was always the great need of my life. As a little child, Vida, I used to feel that I would gladly give up everything for a parent's love. My guardians were good and just men, but somehow they never reached my heart; I dare say the fault was as much mine as theirs. At Eton I was happy enough, though I made no very close friendships; from Eton I went to Oxford. It was in these days that there grew upon me the miserable fear of being sought and valued only for my money and social standing. I was popular, and I saw how, in many instances, that popularity was due not to what I was in myself, but to what I possessed. I fell into the error of believing all men false and mercenary because some were so."

"Oh, blind, blind!" I said softly, as he paused here, and I looked up wistfully into his noble face. "If you had been a poor man, Bertram, you would have been loved for your own sake."

He sighed heavily.

"I was unjust, I own," he responded, "though you love me too much to be an unbiased judge. But then I was not twenty, Vida; I have learned many things since those days.

"But the vacations made matters appear worse to me. Perhaps you hardly know, my child, the open and shameless manner in which a man of wealth is hunted by designing matrons and equally designing maidens. As heir of Langton Chase, and head of an ancient family, I was a notable 'catch' in the matrimonial market, and traps were accordingly laid for me on all sides. I was courted, flattered, caressed, many times frankly advised by interested individuals to pay attention to this or to that lady. Langton Chase was the bait; I was merely an inevitable incumbrance that must be taken along with horses, jewels, lands. You never cared to know, Vida, what my property was worth; I dare say you don't know it now. But these enterprising dames and damsels knew better than I myself in those days the exact rental that each estate brought me in. I grew utterly disgusted, and vowed that if ever I married my intended wife should not know beforehand who and what I was.

"The year I came of age I left England, and, to avoid the attentions of match-making mothers and scheming daughters, I assumed the name of Trevor, and professed to be a younger son, whose al-

lowance depended entirely on his father's will; so that, although I could by this fiction spend as freely as I chose, I was not a desirable bargain matrimonially, nor had I, in any way, the same position as an owner of inalienable property and a large rent-roll."

He paused again, and for a few moments sat silent. I knew he was approaching a painful point in that history of the past, and I laid my hand on his in mute appeal; but he shook his head.

"My darling," he went on gently, "it must be told. Those memories are full of ineffable pain and shame; but, pure though you are, you have knowledge of the world. I can speak to you even of such a woman as Emma Carleton. That was her name, Vida. It was at Avraches, a village in the Pyrenees, that I met her. She was there with her aunt, and I found out afterward why she had been sent to so secluded a spot; but then all was fair and smooth, even to eyes more experienced than mine."

"Emma was eighteen at that time, and you, who have only seen her in her degradation, can form no idea of her attractions. Men are so easily deceived by beauty and vivacity, and I was but a youth. I was made welcome at the cottage the two occupied, and for a while life was an idyl to me. I could not see that Emma laid herself out for admiration, led me on by a thousand pretty coquettices that now would only disgust me, but which then appeared to me only the charming *espiègelerie* of a light-hearted girl. I could not see that she was heartless and selfish, without a particle of truth or honest feeling. She was beautiful, but soulless and debased, hiding it beneath a mask of innocence. The love of money, too, was deep-rooted in her, or rather the love of money's worth—as she reckoned it—pleasure, costly clothing, rich and dainty food, and choice wine also. But none of these vices were known to me until after our marriage. No wine was kept in the cottage, and Emma, seeing that I was very abstemious, affected to dislike wine—as a healthy girl of eighteen might well do. Later I learned that her mother was a confirmed dipsomaniac; the love of strong drink that Emma afterward displayed was inherited."

"I will not say that I loved her, Vida. I was dazzled and infatuated; but she had no power to call forth even a youth's best love. Young though I was, I could have given to such a one as you, Vida, a worship that time would have only strengthened; but my infatuation for Emma Carleton was in its essence transitory. Had she been nothing more than selfish and frivolous, she had no capacity for retaining love; it must have died in a few months, and left a bitter sense of blank and disappointment. But I thought that I loved her; I called the foolish madness love, and believed that she reciprocated it. I would not undeceive her; I dreaded to see the pure flower turn to poison at my touch if I should reveal to her my real position. Thank Heaven for that folly at least."

"Within two months of my first meeting with Emma Carleton, we were married at the church of Avraches—she in her own name, I in the name of Albert Trevor. Emma wanted to go to Paris at once, but her aunt strongly argued against this step. Emma, she urged, had been sent to the Pyrenees for her health; she was delicate, and needed great care. She ought not to visit the gay capital yet; the mountain air was necessary for her. Emma reluctantly

yielded the point, and we agreed to travel for a while through the Pyrenees into Spain.

"Ah, Vida, many men have wrought folly in their youth. I think few have paid so heavy a price for it as I have! What madness was mine—and how brief—how soon the rose-tints faded and revealed to my eyes the hideous corruption they had concealed. Three days after my marriage I saw things in my wife that gave me a vague feeling of uneasiness. I was still too blinded to recognize the true meaning of the signs that disturbed me; but I was vexed, pained, and astonished without analyzing what I felt.

"At Avraches I had never seen Emma in any company but that of her aunt and myself, and remember that from the first moment she saw me she played a part—assumed a character completely foreign to her nature. Now she cared no longer to wear a mask, and she threw it off with reckless suddenness once its purpose had been fulfilled. The first hostelry we stayed at on our journey was kept by a handsome Basque peasant and his wife. Emma's manner with this man displeased me; that is, 'displeasure' was the word I used to myself; in my heart I was more than displeased—I was wounded—partly disillusioned. I said nothing to Emma; I scarcely knew how I could do so; I shrunk, too, from giving form to an impression so wrongful to her; but my eyes were to be further opened that day. When dinner was served—with the usual red wine of the country—Emma asked for some, pleading fatigue. But one glass did not satisfy her. She drank three glasses, and was proceeding to pour out a fourth, when I checked her. Then she flew into a violent passion. 'Why should she not have wine?' she cried. 'She had always been used to it—she had as much as she liked at home. I was a fool to think she didn't like it, she pretended that to please me; she did like it, and couldn't live without it.'

"I sat and heard her as if turned to stone. I saw that the wine she had already taken had mounted to her head; her tongue was loosed, and she uttered many a terrible truth that I strove at the time to persuade myself was only said to wound and anger me, while the conviction was forced upon me that I had been miserably duped. I had intended to tell her that very night my real name, but after that scene I resolved to keep my secret, at least for awhile. A few days more and the woman I had married showed yet more plainly the degraded nature that she had so skillfully hidden from me before she became my wife.

"Before demanding an explanation of her I wrote to her aunt, who was still at Avraches, telling her how monstrously I had been deceived, and insisting on knowing the truth, which, if she withheld, I would discover by other means. There was no post-office in the place where we were then staying, so I had to go to a town two miles distant to fetch the reply to my letter.

"Vida, the lines of that letter danced before my eyes as if they had been written in fire. They showed me that I was worse than a dupe, a fool—that I was a dishonored man. The woman who had lent herself to the fraud that wrecked my life made full confession of the truth, and blacker truth man never learned of his wife. The only excuse Miss Carleton offered for her part in the transaction was that she had hoped Emma would 'reform' under a husband's care.

"I went straight back to the hotel where had left Emma and showed her her aunt's letter. She did not deny the truth of it, but admitted it with callous insolence. I did not waste many words upon her. I told her briefly that after learning her past life, and after what I had myself witnessed, I should leave her at once, and every month I would post to any address she chose to give a sum of money sufficient to keep her in comfort. Fifty pounds I should leave with her now, but from that moment we two must be as though we had never met.

"Then, Vida, there was a terrible scene. Emma gave way to a storm of invective. If I left her she threatened to have her revenge; she would drag my name in the mire, she would find me out wherever I went, every one should know what manner of woman my wife was. But enough—I dare not repeat to you the shameless words that passed her lips. I interrupted her at last, telling her to name an address to which the money could be sent, for I would not listen longer to her. Then she tried to bargain for a larger sum, but this I refused. 'I shall not help you,' I said, 'to drink yourself to death. This sum you will have while you live respectably; but if I discover you to be living otherwise the payments will at once cease.' I gave her the fifty pounds and left her.

"My visits to England after that were few and far between, and then only for a short period each time; until, weary of wandering, I came back and settled here. I dared not stay in London for long together, lest Emma, who was there, might accidentally meet me, and once she saw me she would easily discover my identity. She fulfilled her threat to the letter. I first heard of her, after I left her in the Pyrenees, living a most abandoned life in London. Again and again was she taken before police-courts for drunkenness and creating disturbances in the streets; the latter was often done purposely, as she would say in open court, to punish the husband who had deserted her, by bringing public disgrace upon his name.

"This is the burden I have borne for over twenty years, Vida; and you, my darling, were the first light that came into my dreary life. You taught me to give the only real and true love I have ever given to a woman."

I could not speak, for my heart was too full. I clung more closely to him; and he, too, was silent for a long, long time. No words of mine, had I been able to utter them, could have comforted him; his comfort lay in the knowledge of my love for him, my perfect faith in him.

For twenty years he had been held in this hideous bondage, from which no power but death could release him. And the chain was still unbroken; for years yet to come it might bind him. Death was his only hope, and who shall dare blame him that it was a hope?

I asked him presently if Emma Trevor's aunt, the only person who could have identified him, was living.

"No," he answered, "she died more than ten years ago. The secret is safe, Vida; it rests with you and me."

No one else, then, must know it—not even my sister Nellie—to the end of time. It must sleep with us in our graves. But the re-

sponsibility weighed upon me—it must weigh upon us both—heavily.

"What," I whispered, "if she were ill, and needed a doctor?"

He drew a quick breath and set his teeth, but made no answer.

"Bertram!" I exclaimed, looking into his eyes.

A spasm of pain crossed his features, and he pressed me closer to him.

"Oh, Vida, Vida—did you doubt me? My darling, if a physician should be needed there is one man I think I could trust. Doubtless Emma will feign illness, but that I can detect. I must go to her now, Vida; you need not do any work this morning—indeed, the morning is well-nigh over."

I was glad of this, for indeed my mental condition was such that I could not have concentrated my thoughts upon work. I sat down when he left me, and tried to think; but my brain was in a whirl, any definite thought was impossible. As I sat thus, my face buried in my hands, the memory of Nellie's unread letter flashed into my mind. I had forgotten it all this time! With a pang of remorse I put my hand into my pocket and half drew it forth, but instantly pushed it back again. I could not read it now, my mind was entirely absorbed in the suffering my lover was enduring.

At length—it seemed an age to me—the door opened again, and Bertram Darrell entered. I looked at him anxiously, his face was troubled and haggard. He came forward and sat down by the fire opposite to me, without speaking; but a quick involuntary sigh from me caused him to look up, and he stretched out his hand to me. I rose and went to him, kneeling down by his side, and he put his arms about me and kissed me with trembling lips. Then he turned his face away from me, and said in a low voice—

"It was a miserable scene, Vida, though I do not think she fully comprehended what I told her. She is sober, but her brain is permanently clouded; her whole system is a wreck. She was still lying down when I went into the room, but she rose at once to her feet, and told me to take her to her own apartments. I answered her that those were her apartments, and she would have none other. She laughed defiantly, and tried to spring past me, but this movement I checked, and placed my back against the door.

"'Sit down,' I said, 'and listen to me calmly. If you will not do this I shall leave you until you are in a more tractable mind!'

"'You dictate terms,' she cried, 'as if you were the lord of some mediæval castle, and I your prisoner. Such things can not be done in these days.'

"'Stranger things,' was my answer, 'are done in these days.'

"She looked at me wildly, and asked if I meant to murder her.

"'You know,' I answered, 'that I would not injure a hair of your head; you shall have every care, but you can not leave these rooms. You swore to blazon abroad my dishonor, and I have sworn that you shall never do it. You may scream till you can scream no more, and no one will hear you. Food and clothing you shall have, and all comfort that you can ask for; but you are a prisoner for the rest of your life.'

"Vida, she would not believe me; she raved, and screamed and flung herself upon the floor, and gave vent to a torrent of fearful

abuse. From my soul I pitied her degraded womanhood, but for her had no pity. I waited till the paroxysm of rage had somewhat spent itself, and then I left her, and locked the door behind me. She cried after me that I was trying to fool her, that I could not keep her prisoner; and," he added, "she will not fully understand the truth—yet; but in time it will come to her. Then she will feign penitence, and make a thousand promises, but I am not mad, and will never release her, now that she is in my power."

"She will not," I said anxiously, "attempt her own life?"

"Nay, my child, let not that fear trouble you. The love of life is too strong in her for suicide. There is no weapon, besides, in her apartments, no means of any kind for such a purpose."

I breathed more freely after this assurance, and presently Mr. Darrell left me. The luncheon bell rang almost immediately afterward, and I went to the dining-room.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN the afternoon I opened Nellie's letter, feeling almost guilty as I did so. How little I should have dreamed a few months ago that a letter of my darling sister's could remain the best part of a day unopened! Nellie wrote most cheerfully; she was very happy in her new home, and she described the scenery of the neighborhood in glowing language. "Write to me soon—very soon," she said in conclusion, "and give your Mr. Darrell a metaphorical embrace for me."

Dear old Nell! I smiled at these last words; he was "my" Mr. Darrell in a fuller sense than she had any idea of. I would write to her to-morrow. I had just returned the letter to my pocket, when I was sent for to the study: Mr. Darrell wished to speak to me about the prisoner. How was she to be provided with the necessaries of life without exciting remark? This was the problem to be solved. The mere abstraction of the needful quantity of food might be easy enough in a household like this, but that could not be done in the day-time; and at night Mrs. Ellis locked up safes and pantries, and took the keys; of course, false keys could be made, but what if the butler should chance to hear or see his master or me, stealing, in the dead of night, to places that he knew were locked up? The chance might be one in a hundred, but it would be running a great risk. I pondered the difficulty for a while, then said—

"Bertram, I must have a pensioner in the village yonder. The servants seldom go there, they would not discover the subterfuge. I will discover a bedridden woman, who is in dire poverty—an Irish-woman, so that my sympathy is even more deeply enlisted. You give me leave to take to her whenever I choose food from the larder. In this way, and taking things from the breakfast and luncheon tables, there need be no difficulty. I could go with the pony carriage, and of course simply drive out long enough for my errand, then return home."

"A woman's wit never fails, Vida. Your plan is the best that can be devised. So be it!"

In the drawing-room that evening, I sung to him some of his favorite songs. Then he asked me if I had not heard from Nellie that morning. I told him that I had, pleased that he should take such a kindly interest in my affairs. Would he like to read any of her letter?

"Yes," he replied; "I should, very much, if I may."

I put the letter into his hand.

"May I read it all?" he asked.

"Oh, you may read it all, if you wish!"

He did it all, and at the end looked up, and smiled a little.

"I like the letter very, very much," he said. "Thank you for letting me read it. I feel that I know your sister better. I suppose," he went on, after a pause, "she will have a holiday at Christmas?"

"A fortnight—because, you see, she has not been there long."

"You would like to spend some of the time with her?"

"I could not—"

"But, Vida"—with a restless movement—"you must not be sacrificed."

"It would be sacrifice to go. I don't want to leave you!"

"Sweetheart—but you must see your sister! I was wondering if she would come here for her vacation."

"Oh, that would be nice! But perhaps—"

I paused, looking at him. He smiled a little, stroking my curls.

"Perhaps what, my child?"

"You are only thinking of me—you would rather Nellie did not come?"

"If I were only thinking of you, am I not equally thinking of myself also? But indeed I should like very much to know your sister. She must be very good for you to love her so much."

"She is good, far better than I am," I exclaimed earnestly.

"I can't believe that, Vida. But I am sure to love her. Write and ask her if she will come."

"How good of you to ask her!" I said gratefully; but he shook his head.

"To be good to you, Vida, is to be good to myself," he answered.

I left him shortly after two, and went to my own rooms.

I wrote to Nellie that night, and Mr. Darrell himself posted my letter the next morning, while I was engaged in the library.

The afternoon, fortunately, was fine, and at luncheon my employer told me, in the hearing of the servant, that he should not require my services that afternoon, and that I could go out if I chose. So I took Hubert and Ian with me, and went for a walk. I did not run and play with the dogs this time; my thoughts kept me very sober. I had no heart for romping. I did not feel just then as if I should ever romp again.

It was getting dark when I returned home, and I ran upstairs first and took off my coat and hat, and then went to the library, where afternoon tea was usually served. There was the equipage ready on the little table near the fire, and the room looked pre-eminently inviting, for the lamps were not yet lighted, only the glow of a splendid fire shone upon hangings and furniture. The two dogs stretched themselves down before the blaze, and I took my favorite low chair on the rug, and sat gazing into the dancing flames. My

thoughts wandered to that hapless prisoner in the west wing. There was something terrible in the idea of my sitting here in her place—in a sense her place—from which she was self-banished; to her should have belonged the love that was given to me, but she had slain even the romantic fancy that called itself love, even before her husband learned that terrible truth that must have crushed love's very self out of all semblance of life. She had sinned past redemption, past forgiveness. Oh, what might have been! What years of happiness wasted, what fair flowers trampled upon! I tried to picture the woman as she might have been, fair and gracious, with a soft smile in her eyes and on her lips, sitting where I sat now, mistress of this noble mansion, mistress of its owner's heart, waiting for him in the gloaming, listening for his well-known step, rising with outstretched hands to greet him when he came in; but somehow imagination failed. Athwart the picture I strove to paint would persistently come the grim actuality I had seen, the miserable drunkard, with rouged cheeks and bedraggled finery, lolling opposite to me, or, as I saw her later, reveling in insolent triumph over her husband.

I shook myself with a shuddering sigh, as if by movement I could free my brain from thoughts so painful, and just then the door opened quietly, and Bertram Darrell entered.

"My dear child!" he said, advancing to the fire as I rose, "why did you wait for me?"

"How could I do otherwise?" I answered hurriedly, turning from him to ring the bell.

He sat down on the opposite side of the fire-place, and I resumed my seat. The servant came in with the tea, lighted the chandelier and retired. I poured out the steaming beverage without looking at Mr. Darrell, and carried a cup across to him. I felt sure—for was not my being in sympathy with his?—that he was very much disturbed this evening; he had doubtless seen his wife again; but I shrunk from asking him any questions. I drank my tea in silence, and I noticed that he hardly touched his.

"Let me pour you out some fresh tea," I ventured to say presently. "What you have must be cold."

"Thanks, no, my Vida; I have had all I care for this evening." I said no more, but, glancing at him furtively, saw that he was staring steadily into the fire, and that he looked haggard, almost ill. With trembling fingers I broke off some pieces of cake and gave them to Hubert, who came and laid his nose on my knee with a wistful backward glance at the cake-basket. Mr. Darrell looked up and watched me for a moment or two; then, with a half-sigh, he rose and began to walk up and down—not near me, but at the further end of the room. The deer-hound rose too with a soft whine and followed him. Bertram stopped once, and laid a caressing hand on the noble animal's head, then resumed his walk, Ian still following his footsteps. So for fully ten minutes he paced the room. How long was I to keep silence, with my heart burning within me? Surely he would speak to me soon, and, if not, then I must speak to him. Suddenly he turned and came up to the fire-place.

"Vida," he said abruptly—"Vida, if you were not with me, I should go mad."

I had risen as he approached, and he gathered me in his arms and strained me to his heart.

"My only treasure!" he continued brokenly. "Oh, Vida, tell me how I am to combat the dreadful wish, that death may release me from the woman I left an hour ago?"

What could I answer? How could I condemn the wish? My lips formed the word "Pray!" but there was no sound. He saw the movement of my lips, and, with a bitter laugh, put me from him, and began to walk excitedly up and down again.

"Pray?" he repeated. "Ay, I have prayed. To-day I took her food and wine; she scarcely looked at me. This evening I went to her again; the food remained untouched; but she had drunk the wine, and she was changed. She raved for more wine, and, when I denied it her, she howled and shrieked like a maniac. 'She must have it!' she declared; it was all she lived upon! She would die without it! I knew that well enough, and I meant to kill her! Then she groveled at my feet, and implored me, as if she were begging for her life, to give her the accursed drink that would destroy it. I left her, for I could bear no more; and as I locked the door she flung herself against it, like one maddened, as she was—mad for drink! What am I to do? How can I suffer her to drink herself into insensibility? Would that save her life?—and, if it did, what is the life, the mere physical existence? I gave her more wine to-day than I would dare to drink myself, for I knew that even to reduce the quantity to what a man might take with impunity would be to injure her; yet she must have more—she craves for it with an insane craving, and I dare not give it to her. Heavens"—he stopped, and covered his face, shuddering visibly—"to see a woman mad for wine—praying for it, pleading for it!—the horror of it!"

Then he dropped his hands, and turned to me—his whole face and manner changed.

"My own Vida," he continued, "I ought not to speak of such things to you. In my misery I poured out my heart to you—forgive me—"

But I suffered him to say no more.

"I am not a child," I interrupted passionately, "but a woman. Why should anything that troubles you be withheld from me, Bertram? You will wound me deeply if you deny me your confidence because you must tell me of things that are painful and terrible!"

"Is it so, Vida?"—drawing me to him, and looking down into my flushed face. "Nay, then, you shall not be wounded. I thought to spare you, but I was wrong; love does not seek to be spared, but to share." And he kissed my lips with a lover's fervor.

"Vida," he said presently, "what am I to do in this? Am I right to deny her more wine?"

"I think you are," I answered. "You can not deprive her of what has become a necessity to her existence—she could not now live without it; but I think it would be wrong to give her what she asks for. The craving may pass off; but let her have the same quantity to-morrow as you gave her to-day; and, if you find that she has again left untouched the food, tell her she shall have no

more wine until she has eaten something. She will soon die unless she is forced to eat something."

"She has almost killed herself as it is, Vida. She is a wreck—bodily and mentally. Her system is shattered—she can not last long. No skill, no care, could prolong her life beyond a few months."

I clasped my hands together in an agony of despair.

"Oh, Bertram—she must not perish body and soul! Can nothing be done for her?"

I never saw such pain in a man's face as was in his then.

"Vida," he said huskily, "you don't understand—you don't know what havoc has been wrought. I think she has no power of comprehension; the brain has almost gone!"

"Bertram!"

"Ay, it is so. I will watch her from day to day, and, if I see a glimpse of intelligence, I will try what can be done; but now she could not understand anything clearly."

"How awful—oh, Bertram, how awful!"

"Awful indeed!" he said gloomily. "Heaven knows if hers is all the guilt. The mother which sinned before her has a heavy account on her soul."

"But you do not mean," I asked, at length, "that she is idiotic?"

"No, not as you mean—as it is generally seen and understood. She knew her power over me and what use she could make of it, and so might an idiot. The lack of brain power is differently shown in her, but it amounts to the same thing. What her own perverted instincts teach her, she can lay hold of; but you could not make her receive any impression from without that an idiot could not equally receive. Her mind is shattered; speak to her—attempt to speak to her—of her soul, of her conscience—she would laugh, or perhaps ask you for drink. If she began to see that you were deeply interested in making her understand you, she would feign attention, and presently try to coax you into giving her more drink. She is a hopeless dipsomaniac; and how such are judged, only Heaven knows. They are past all help from man!"

No more was said that evening on the painful subject that filled the thoughts of both; but I saw that the end was nearer than I had imagined. Could I regret it? Could I wish it otherwise?

At luncheon, on the following day, Bertram turned to me, in the presence of one of the servants, and said that if I liked to take the pony-chaise early, and carry some provisions to the old Irishwoman I had discovered yesterday, I could do my work for him later.

"Thank you so much!" I responded; so I presently ran down to Mrs. Ellis, and she willingly gave me sundry choice morsels of food, which she insisted on packing for me herself in a basket. She did not ask any questions about my *protégée*, and I was glad of it, for, though the servants hardly ever went into the village, I felt nervous about my imaginary Irishwoman, and did not want to define the exact position of her dwelling.

I was back again at the Chase by fire o'clock, and Bertram Darrell himself came to the entrance, and took the basket that was supposed to be empty from the chaise. There was provision in it for two days at the least—perhaps more.

But, alas, it proved to be more than enough for a week! That evening Bertram told me that the wretched woman had left untouched the food he had taken her.

He had told her she should have no more wine until she ate something.

"I can't eat," was the answer—"food chokes me. To live I must have wine."

"Do you think," I said, "that, hating solid food, she is pretending she can not eat it, in order to force you to give her what she prefers?"

But he shook his head gloomily.

"No," she replied; "I believe there is no shamming in this. She can only eat a very, very small quantity of solid food. I do not suppose that, for months, she has eaten sufficient to keep an ordinary woman from sheer starvation; drink alone sustains such life as she has; but it is killing her rapidly. I believe your journeys to the village will prove quite needless, although they must be kept up for a little while longer to avert the possibility of suspicion. All that Emma requires can be taken without any fear of its being missed."

He was right; there was clearly no pretense in the hapless woman's assertion that she could not eat. When Bertram Darrell went to her again, about eight o'clock, she had eaten nothing, and was in a state of great prostration. Then he gave her the wine she craved for.

Four days later, when I asked him how she was, he answered—

"Failing, and to all appearance, failing rapidly; yet she may go on like this for weeks, or she may collapse suddenly."

These constant interviews with the degraded woman who bore his name tried Bertram Darrell terribly; her very presence under his roof was like a hideous nightmare to him; her face, her horrible words, haunted him.

"You are my only refuge, Vida," he said to me once; "I could not live without you. When I leave her, I come straight to you."

I saw this; how he clung to me more and more in those miserable days. I remember once going into the library, not knowing he was there, and finding him standing by the hearth. He turned to me with eager, outstretched hands.

"Where have you been, Vida?" he asked hurriedly. "I came here to look for you. I wanted you—I need you so much, darling!"

"I did not know you were looking for me," I whispered penitently, as though I had been in some way to blame.

"Dear one—how should you know? I am too exacting; you must not let me grow selfish, Vida—it is so easy for a man to become selfish."

That was true, I knew, generally; but not, I thought, of him. He was a particularly unselfish man.

I had almost doubted, when Bertram Darrell had expressed his opinion that Emma might live for weeks, that this could be possible for one who existed almost entirely upon stimulants; the event however proved that he was right. The middle of December found her still lingering on the borderland—the brain almost hopelessly gone, but the body scarcely perceptibly weaker.

In three days Nellie's holidays would commence, and she would

be coming to the Chase—for, of course, she had gladly accepted the invitation. I asked Mr. Darrell if I should put her off, but he would not hear of it.

"Why should you?" he asked. "It would make no difference, even if—" And he stopped abruptly, and turned away.

Both of us had shrunk instinctively from speaking of that subject, though it was constantly present to us. The ghastly thought would come to me—"What will he do when she dies? How will he give her burial?" But I never put the question to him, and knew not if he had already formed his plans.

It was a fine, mild December day when I drove to Durnford station in the pony-carriage to meet Nellie, for she had told me she was only bringing a large portmanteau, and there was plenty of room for that in the little vehicle. The train was to arrive at three o'clock, so, even allowing for its being late, which it was sure to be, Nellie would be in good time to have some tea and a chat with Bertram Darrell before she had to dress for dinner. I wondered, as I drove along, what she would think of him—of course she would like him and admire him—whether she would suspect that I was something dearer to him than a well-respected secretary. Not, I was sure, if he did not mean her to suspect, and he would not wish Nellie to divine the relations between us. Ignorant as she was, as she must ever be, of all that I knew, she would fail to understand why, if he loved me, I did not remain in his house as his wife, or cease to be an inmate of it. He must have felt very certain that Nellie would know no more than we chose her to know before he invited her to the Chase; so I had no fear or misgivings as I rattled briskly through the lanes, the boar-hound, Karl, bounding on before me.

I reached the station punctually at three, but I had to wait more than ten minutes before the train came in, and there was Nellie's dear face looking out of a second-class carriage and breaking into sunny smiles as she caught sight of me.

Our foreign birth and training allowed us to kiss each other on the platform, though we reserved a complete embrace for a more private occasion.

"What a swell you are, Vida," said Nellie, as we went through the booking-office to the carriage; "driving about in pony carriages! And, oh, my dear"—catching sight of Karl—"what a superb dog! That is Karl, I know."

"Yes; pet him, Nell. Karl is a friend to all my friends; are you not, Karl? You must love Nellie very much, you know."

Karl came up in a dignified manner, and allowed Nellie to pat his head, surveying her with a scrutinizing gaze, which apparently satisfied him, for he wagged his tail approvingly.

"He takes me on your credit, no doubt," laughed Nellie, as we took our places in the carriage. "Vraiment, Vida,"—as I took up the reins—"you handle the ribbons as if you had driven your own pony-carriage for years!"

I laughed, and we chatted gayly all the way to the Chase, with which Nellie was prepared, from my description, to be enraptured.

"And you know," she said, "as I have often told you, I'm immensely curious to see your Mr. Darrell. Dear me, how very funny

and improper it is—two young women like us staying in a bachelor's house—far worse for you, though, living here always!"

"We couldn't do it in the world, Nell; but this is out of the world. Mr. Darrell has already made up his mind to like you, and Mrs. Ellis means to make a fuss over you. I shall be jealous!"

"You jealous? What a joke! And it's all for your sake, you dearest of girls! Ah, there's the Chase! Delightful old place—how I mean to revel among its treasures!"

Mr. Darrel must have been watching for the pony-carriage, for as it drew up before the entrance—the same to which I had come more than five months before—he came out from the deep porch and descended the steps.

"A thousand welcomes to Langton, Miss Nellie," he said, holding out his hand to Nellie; "you see I treat you as an old friend, I feel as if you were one."

"I am very glad you do feel so, Mr. Darrell," returned Nellie, quite touched by the warmth of his greeting, "and it is very kind of you."

"Don't say that; but I hope"—assisting her to alight—"that you will make yourself entirely at home. Vida"—and he turned to me, as we all went into the house—"if you and your sister would prefer to have some tea sent up to you, pray have it so."

"Oh, I am sure," I answered, "that Nellie would rather come down to the library—wouldn't you, Nell?"

"Let your sister speak for herself," said Bertram, smiling down at Nellie's face.

Nellie glanced brightly from one to the other.

"Since you give me the choice," she responded, "I will give my verdict for the library."

"I believe," I added to Mr. Darrell, "you think we two have some wonderful confidences to exchange. Men generally have that notion concerning women."

"Is it not partly founded on fact? You and your sister will certainly enjoy a long talk when you go to your room to-night."

"Of course," I exclaimed, and we both laughed—"less reason, then, for wanting to talk now!"

"I must give up; I am no match for your Irish tongue, Vida."

I laughed again, rather wickedly, and, as he turned aside to the library, ran on upstairs with Nellie. I could scarcely prevent her from stopping on the way to admire this thing or that.

"You can stare as much as you like to-morrow, Nell," I told her, "but we shall never get to the library for tea if we behave like bumpkins at a cattle-show!"

"For shame, Vida, to compare a splendid old house to a cattle-show!"

But I had my way, and hurried her into my room, and pushed her into a luxurious arm-chair by the fire.

"What a delightful room," she cried, looking round her—"and a fire all day! Dear, dear—not like the Paris days, is it, when we used to be so cold up in our bedroom, *au quatrième*? Oh, Vida, what a handsome man your Mr. Darrell is! He looks a true gentleman, every inch of him—I like his face immensely. He must have

suffered very much, I should imagine," she added, more thoughtfully, looking into the fire.

"Ay," I agreed, "you can see that."

"A very noble face," observed Nellie. Then, looking up and brightening again, she said—"So he calls you 'Vida.' Well, he couldn't 'Miss Verona' you forever—and he is so much older than you."

Just then Nellie's portmanteau was brought up, and Mrs. Ellis came to pay her respects to Nellie, who charmed the old lady, as she did every one.

Then Nell and I descended to the library, where we found the tea equipage all ready on a pretty little table before the blazing fire, and there were Mr. Darrell and the three dogs waiting for us.

We were very happy, we three, in the dear old library, and the dogs were allowed more cake than usual, in honor of Nellie's coming. Mr. Darrell made Nellie talk to him a great deal about her doings, "drawing her out" as an experienced man of the world knows how to do, so that Nellie—than whom no one could be less egotistical—was not aware how much she had been led to speak about herself.

After dinner we repaired to the drawing-room, where Nellie and I sang duets and solos, and she examined pictures and photographs and curios without end. The evening seemed to fly quickly by, and it was past eleven before I thought it was ten. Mr. Darrell shook hands with us both when we bade him good-night, and told us not to talk into the small hours.

Half an hour later, with warm crimson dressing-gowns drawn closely round us, we were lounging on the thick fur rug before the bedroom fire. Without, the December wind was howling dismally among the leafless trees; within, all was warmth and brightness. I reclined on the rug, leaning my elbow on the velvet cushions taken from a couple of arm-chairs; Nellie sat in a low *fauteuil*, and clasped her hands round her knee.

We had not talked much while undressing, and now, when we had settled ourselves for a good talk, there was a pause, both of us gazing into the fire, both thinking. Nellie first roused herself, and gave me the benefit of her thoughts—mine I kept to myself.

"Yes," she said slowly, as if I had spoken and provoked her remark, "Mr. Darrell is quite outside the groove, he isn't a bit like everybody else. I hate people whose counterparts one may meet any day and anywhere; one wouldn't find his counterpart in a hurry!"

She glanced at me as she said this. Was she sounding me, I wondered, with an odd feeling of amusement? Was she "speering," as the Scotch say, trying to discover if I had found my employer's society too fascinating, or if he had found mine so? I answered quietly—

"Why no; I don't think one would."

"He is thrown away down here," pursued Nellie; "he ought to live in the world. They must be very strong reasons that can make such a man bury himself alive. I don't ask any questions, because you may know something about him, and of course you couldn't tell; but I have my own ideas."

"Pray what are they, Nell?" I asked, smiling.

"Oh, you'll think I've got imbued with your novels!"

"How slightly you speak of my poor efforts! But I shall not think anything of the sort. There are romances in real life as well as in novels. Let me have your ideas."

"Well," said Nellie meditatively, her eyes steadily fixed upon the blazing fire, "one is that some dreadful crime has been committed by a member of his family—he is a very proud man and would feel such a thing more than most people do in these days. I don't believe he has done any wrong himself"—I could have kissed her for that—I was glad, oh, so glad, Nellie did not think my true-hearted lover could have done anything that would dishonor him!—"no one could believe that of him. Another fancy is that he is a married man living apart from his wife; such an affair might account for his long exile and his present solitary life; then again he may have had, or have still, some unfortunate passion—that seems the most likely—that he was in love with some one he could not marry, or who died, and he has not yet recovered from the shock, or the woman is living still and he loves her."

"You funny girl!" I exclaimed, laughing.

"Why so? There must be some reason—" Nellie stopped and bit her lip.

"Some reason why he leads a secluded life? Of course; but—"

"No; that wasn't what I was going to say," Nellie interrupted, leaning her head back on the cushion of the chair. "Never mind."

I looked at her covertly and was silent. I divined what it was she would have said, and therefore abstained from asking further questions. "Some reason why he does not marry," was in Nellie's mind, "or he must have fallen in love with you." Nellie thought me "all-conquering," like my name; for all that, I do not think I should have guessed at her meaning a few months ago; I was wiser now.

"I suppose nobody comes here for Christmas?" Nellie asked, after a short silence, and speaking rather at random, for she knew nobody was coming.

"Why, Nell," I said, laughing, "how could you and I be here if guests were expected?"

"Of course not. How stupid of me! I am glad, too. I don't want anybody but you and your employer."

"And I am sure I don't want a lot of people about," I responded. "Look here, Nellie. On Christmas Eve we'll make Mr. Darrell tell us some ghost stories. There are lots of real ones he knows, and legends, and he tells them beautifully."

"Oh, delicious!" cried Nellie, clapping her hands. "By the way, I hope this room is not haunted," she said, glancing nervously round her.

"No; there are no ghosts here; but there are plenty in some of the other rooms."

"Don't talk about ghosts, Vida. We shall be afraid to go to bed."

It was past two o'clock when we did actually retire for the night, and even then we talked for some little time; but we fell asleep at last, and awoke bright and early the next morning.

CHAPTER XV.

IT was mild and dry, with a south-west wind blowing, when we went down to breakfast, and I thought it would be pleasant to have a good walk in the country, for I was to have a holiday while Nellie remained here, and Bertram had promised me that he, too, would only do such work as was absolutely necessary.

He was in the breakfast-room when we entered, and shook hands with us both; but to Nellie he said, smiling—

“I suppose I must not ask you at what hour in the morning you two young ladies retired to rest?”

“Oh, I am not ashamed of our misconduct!” Nellie replied, laughing. “It was twenty minutes past two!”

“Then you lost your beauty-sleep—but you don’t need it!”

“That would cut two ways, Mr. Darrell.”

“Not with you, Miss Verona; your glass must tell you that!”

I heard his words with unbounded pleasure—I was so glad he thought Nellie pretty—she never thought so herself.

When the morning meal was over, Nellie went up to my room, to write a letter to her employers—she had promised to write to them at once, telling them of her safe arrival at her destination; but she had not told them exactly where she was going to stay—“with her sister in Marlshire,” was all she had said. Mr. Darrell took up the “Times” and stood leaning against the mantel-piece, reading; I seated myself in the window with the “Standard.”

In a few moments he threw aside the paper, and held out his hand to me.

“Come, Vida,” he said; and I rose and went over to him. He put his arm round me and drew my head down upon his breast. “Well, sweetheart,” he went on tenderly, “what are you and Nellie going to do to-day?”

“I don’t know what Nell would like to do; but I know what I should, and I think she would too.”

“What is that?”

“To go for a walk—if you will accompany us,” I answered, looking up at him coaxingly.

“You sweet pleader! You don’t need to coax me—you know my only desire is to be with you.”

“But you might not care to come for a walk?”

“I should like it more than anything, dear; and in any case I should like it if you did. But perhaps your sister would rather have you to herself?”

“Oh, no! She would prefer to have you with us, I know. I will ask her what she would wish to do; we are both so fond of roaming, that I feel sure she would like the walk.”

“Very well—you can ask her; but not just yet. I am not going to let you run away.”

I was nothing loath to remain in his tender loving clasp; but at length he released me, and I ran up to Nellie, who had finished her letter, and was about to descend in search of me. She was delight-

ed at the idea of a walk, and opened her eyes wide when I told her that Mr. Darrell thought he might be *de trop*.

"What a notion!" she exclaimed. "Vida—how odd that he should have so little idea how nice he is!"

What a thrill of happiness her words gave me! It was sweet to know that she appreciated him.

In half an hour we three started, taking with us the dogs. We went through the park, across the brook, and out into the country beyond—beautiful even though the trees were bare, and the hills bereft of verdure; I ran races with the dogs once more, so did Nellie; in fact we behaved like a couple of giddy girls. Mr. Darrell was in better spirits than I had ever known him; and oh, how happy I was to see him so! But I never left him for long, I was happiest by his side, and I know he liked to have me with him, though he wanted me to enjoy myself in my own way.

We returned rather late for luncheon, and immediately afterward Mr. Darrell withdrew—to the west wing, I knew—and I took Nellie to the picture-gallery, which occupied us until tea-time. I took an opportunity of whispering a question to Bertram when we met again—"How is she?" and the answer was, "No marked change; but a gradual sinking."

"A physician?" I suggested.

"Doctors can not work miracles, Vida."

I could not say more; for Nellie came up just then; besides, he was right—there was nothing for a doctor to work upon in a frame literally destroyed by strong drink. It was a marvel how this hapless creature had lived so long. For three days she had eaten nothing, beyond a small piece of bread soaked in wine; if wine had been denied her, she would have collapsed and died in a few hours.

On the fourth day, when Bertram joined us in the drawing-room before dinner, I saw at once—though perhaps no one else would have noticed it—that there was a great change in him; and I was miserably anxious; but I could ask no questions now. At dinner he exerted himself to talk; but I knew that it was an effort. As we rose to return to the drawing-room he turned to me, saying—

"Vida, if your sister will kindly excuse you, will you go into the library in a few minutes? I want to speak to you about a little business matter."

"Very well," I responded, and went out with Nellie.

"Nothing wrong, I hope?" she asked.

"Oh, no!" I answered. "He has never found fault with me yet!"

"I should think not," responded Nellie.

I went to the library and waited with a beating heart, and in a few minutes the door opened and Bertram entered. He came to my side, where I stood before the fire.

"Vida," he said, "you will have divined something of what I wanted to say to you." I lifted my eyes to his grave stern face, with a startled question. "No," he said hurriedly, answering the look—for I had not uttered a word—"not that—but it is near. There is a great change in her. I found her to-day in a kind of stupor—I have seen that before—but her face showed me that her life must be spanned now by hours rather than days. I succeeded

in rousing her; but it is an entire collapse of all power. I must not remain long away—I must watch by her to-night, and do what I can for her, though human aid can avail her little now. You will excuse me to your sister."

But I caught his hand in both mine.

"Bertram," I entreated, "let me go to her?"

"You! Are you mad?" he said passionately. "You do not know what you ask, Vida! No, it is impossible."

"Why impossible?" I cried, still clinging to him. "Let her be what she will, she is dying, and I may be able to do something for her."

"My darling—you ask too much. It is no fit sight for you!"

"Bertram, I am not a child, and my life has not been a path of roses. She may be horrible to look upon; but how can I shrink from her, if I could do any good? Let me come, and, if my presence disturbs her, I will leave her; but, if not, let me stay!"

His brow relaxed—he gazed down at me with a very troubled look.

"You are a noble-hearted woman, Vida," he said, "but you forget that she may rally enough to resent your presence on my account."

"No," I urged firmly, though I felt myself change color, "I do not forget; but she is probably past that. She would only recognize me as one of her own sex, who might help to soothe her suffering."

"Vida, you are truly named—you have conquered. But remember"—he laid his hand on my shoulder—"I will not suffer any insult to you. If she uses coarse language to you, you shall not remain in the room another minute. In this I will be obeyed!"

"I will not ask to disobey," I returned, kissing his hand gratefully.

"Then go and tell Nellie that you have some work to do for me—and that is true—and then return to me here."

I ran quickly to the drawing-room, and told Nellie that I must be very busy for some hours perhaps; and Mr. Darrell begged her to excuse him also. He was so sorry this should have happened.

"Indeed, you must not make a stranger of me," Nellie responded, adding—"but I hope nothing serious is the matter?"

"It is some private business," I explained, "that he told me about a little while ago. He did not want me to assist him; but he could not get through it all himself to-night; so I insisted. Don't wait up for me; I may be rather late."

"Then I dare say I shall go to bed early," Nellie said, "for I have a threatening of headache."

"Do, dear!"—and, with a hurried embrace and kiss, I hastened back to the library.

"I don't like your coming, Vida," Bertram said. "You must not blame me, dear one, that I shrink from taking you into her presence."

He laid his hand for a moment on my head, and kissed my brow reverently; then he led me from the library.

He did not go to the west wing by the way I had been—the only way I knew. He crossed the hall and entered a small sitting-room,

never or rarely used, and, taking from his pocket a key, opened therewith, at the further end of this room, a door, which I had imagined belonged to one of those large closets that abound in old houses. I saw however that it gave access to a narrow passage, terminating in a flight of stairs; then came another passage, and at the end of this a heavy door. A second flight of stairs brought us to another door, which, when my companion unlocked it, I saw must be seven or eight inches thick. He closed and locked this behind him, as he had done the first door; and by the rays of the lamp he carried I saw that we were in a square oaken hall, from which opened several doors. Opposite to the door by which we had entered was a lofty arch, giving admittance to a long corridor, and it was into this corridor that Bertram led me. Like the hall, it was ceiled and paneled with oak; there were no windows, but on either side were doors, set in deep recesses, and between the doors were figures of knights in armor, which in broad daylight would have looked grim and eerie enough, but now, in the dim lamplight, seemed fearfully ghost-like. But my heart was filled with emotion that drove out all trivial fancies and impressions. Before one of these deep-sunk doors, Bertram Darrell paused, and placed the lamp on a bracket.

"This is the room," he said, in a suppressed tone. He turned and looked at me, and I met his gaze unflinchingly. Suddenly he caught both my hands in his, and bowed his face upon them.

"I can not bear it, Vida," he muttered, "that you should enter here!"

"Oh, hush," I whispered—"you must not feel so! You would not have me turn back?"

"No," he responded, lifting his head. "I would not—and yet I would. Forgive me, my child. I honor you the more for coming; but it is so hard that I must suffer it."

He turned to the door, and, drawing forth a key, placed it gently in the lock. The next moment the door swung open, and I passed within that prison-chamber.

It was large and lofty; the light came from an oil lamp, suspended from the ceiling, and hung so high that even a tall man could not reach it; from above also came the light in the day-time; for there were no windows. Well might Bertram Darrell say no sound from this chamber could penetrate beyond its walls. The furniture was handsome and old-fashioned, and a large fire burned in the grate.

This I saw in one comprehensive glance; but I had no eye for details—one thing only I saw distinctly, and that was the human occupant of this chamber. She lay on a bed at the further end of the room, dressed, but partially covered by a handsome coverlet. Her face was hidden from me; I could only see her tangled unkempt hair, and her wasted, almost livid hands lying on the coverlet. She made no movement, as Bertram Darrell closed the door; and I looked at him in alarm.

"Perhaps she is sleeping," he whispered, "or is in a stupor."

He advanced softly to the bedside, and bent over her; and then I noticed that on a small table near were a decanter and glass, the former nearly empty. That sight struck me with an indescribable

horror—that decanter seemed to possess a hideous power;—there it stood—the destroyer, and there lay its victim.

"Emma!" Bertram said gently. Still she did not move.

I stepped to his side, and saw that she was breathing, though faintly. He passed his arm round her, and turned her, so that she lay on her back, thus giving her more air.

That face, shall I ever forget it—ever forget the thrill of horror—of pity—that ran through me as I beheld it—all that was womanly blotted out, a ghastly repulsive wreck, of what had once been fair and comely! The hapless creature's eyes were closed. I do not think she was conscious. Instinctively I sunk down upon my knees, and clasped my hands in silent prayer for the soul that was passing to its long and terrible account.

Bertram covered his face; and for some minutes there was no sound in the room, save the soft crackling of the fire, and the faint breathing of the dying woman. Suddenly her breathing changed—it was slower, but heavy and stertorous. I looked up, and rose quickly to my feet. Bertram laid his hand on my arm, and we stood silently looking at her. The heavy lids stirred; the eyes, dim and glazed, opened slowly, and rested on my face. Then she turned them toward the table where the decanter stood; she evidently could not see it; but what consciousness she had was of the drink that had destroyed her; what memory she had, was of the place where the wine stood—"the ruling passion, strong in death." Her lips moved feebly—she tried to speak—but the power had left her; there was only an inarticulate murmur. She was asking for the wine: I looked questioningly at Bertram; but he shook his head.

"No," he said, "she could not swallow it now; and it would not save her."

I knew that; the dews of death were already on her brow; an ashen hue had overspread her face. A spasm of disappointment crossed her features—again she tried to move her head—to speak—again she strove to see the bottle wherein—

"Like a pearl dissolving
Had sunk and dissolved her soul;"

and feebly moved her hand, as if she would ask, by gesture, what her lips no longer had power to pray for. But that effort was her last. The glaing eyes closed—there was a faint gurgle—a sigh—and Bertram Darrell's wife was dead.

It seemed, in the silence, as if we two who stood by that awful death-bed scarcely breathed. Bertram had buried his face in his hands. I, after a moment, turned aside; then, instinctively, drew the sheet over the ghastly face. As I finished my painful task, I felt Bertram's hand on my arm.

"Come," he said quietly, as I looked up into his colorless face—"come with me. There is nothing more that you can do."

I left the room with him, and he locked the door; then he took up the lamp he had left outside, and, never once speaking the whole way, led me back to the library. Then for the first time he spoke.

"You are trembling, Vida," he said—"this has unnerved you. Sit down here, my child"—placing me in a *fauteuil* near the fire—"and I will bring you some wine."

"No, not wine, please," I pleaded; "only a little water."

He brought me water, and I drank it eagerly; then, seating himself by me, he took my hand in his, and gazed anxiously into my face.

"Are you better now?" he asked gently, after a pause.

"Yes—much better. I shall be quite myself in a moment. It is so terrible—oh, so terrible, to die like that!"

I shuddered, and Bertram drew me toward him, and soothed me tenderly. After a time I lifted myself, looking up at him.

"Bertram," I said, "will you tell me—you know what I would ask—you have thought—" I stopped. I could get no further.

"I have thought," he replied, divining the question my lips refused to utter, "what I must do. Yes, and there is but one thing to be done. I could not bury her without the certainty of discovery, and with that the peril of incurring a charge of murder. The alternative is a terrible one, Vida, but I can see no other. To-night—or rather in the early hours of morning—I must take her out, and carry her to the wood, and lay her down, as if she had died there. She will seem to be some poor woman, who has turned aside from the road to die. It may chance that some laborer will discover her; if not, I will seem to do so; and, seeing that the woman died on my land, I will order her funeral at my expense. So no man shall know who she is. Her grave shall keep the miserable secret forever."

Oh, the misery of it! I could have wept tears of blood that he should be forced to this—to carry his dead wife out, and lay her in the wood, as though she were a common tramp, who had perished by the wayside, her very grave a charity, and not a right. And then the horror of the ordeal—of his carrying the corpse in the dead of night, through the long corridors, and out under the somber trees! I clinched my hands together in agony.

"Oh, Heaven," I cried, "if there were any other way; but there is none!"

"None!" he said, rising, and walking to and fro. "It is a hideous task; but I have grown used to it in thought, and I must face it."

Suddenly I rose, and stood before him.

"Bertram, let me come with you."

He put his hand upon my shoulder, and for the first time I quailed before his look.

"Vida," he said, "I have never spoken sternly to you. Do you want me to do so now?"

"No, no,"—I felt choking—"but, oh, hear me! You will need me—to light you to the postern."

"Vida," he said, and his voice softened, "you must not try me so. I have yielded to you once to-night; I can not yield in this. You must not ask it of me, my child."

I knew that it would be useless to plead further, so I turned sorrowfully away.

"Vida," he said presently, "it is late. Go and rest now, dear one."

"Let me stay here—and wait for you," I begged; "you will want me then—you will be horribly alone!"

"I know it," he responded hoarsely, and I saw the shudder that went through him; "but you must not tempt me to selfishness, Vida. I can not leave you alone. No, my child, go to your sister."

"I will not, Bertram. I could not rest. I must wait for you."

"Rest—no; but you would not be alone."

"I am not afraid to be alone—and Nellie, she will be asleep—she will know nothing. Bertram, let me stay!"

And to that prayer he yielded. Heaven knows what I suffered, as I sat alone in the library, waiting for his return. I saw it all—all that he did—my mind followed every dreadful detail—and to all this horror there was the added terror of possible discovery. If, by some fatal chance, he were seen, would not his act have all the appearance of concealing the corpse of a victim? It was in vain that I tried to argue how more than unlikely it was that any one should be in a place so remote at that hour; but imagination will not always be quieted by reason; and every minute that passed seemed to my anguish of suspense an hour.

Thank Heaven, that was his step outside. I lifted myself and rose, with wildly beating heart. The door opened, and Bertram Darrell entered. I shall never forget his face, as I saw it then. It was ghastly white, drawn, and haggard—with a strange horror in the glittering eyes. He came forward, without seeming to see me, and sunk shuddering into a chair, covering his face.

I went and knelt by his side, and endeavored to soothe him. He started at my touch, and, for a second, seemed as if he would have repulsed me; then he suddenly bowed his head on my shoulder, shaking like a man with the ague. Presently he grew calmer, and whispered brokenly—

"Forgive me, Vida—it is I who am unnerved now. You have been such a comfort to me, dear one."

"I am so glad I stayed with you," I murmured.

"You must leave me soon, darling."

"Not yet, Bertram—not yet."

"Before the dawn, my child. Your sister will think that it is scarcely seemly for me to keep you working all night."

I could not contradict him; for his sake, rather than my own, I must yield.

"It is not dawn for nearly an hour yet," I said.

"Then I can keep you a little longer, Vida. To-morrow I shall be able to speak to you—but to-night I can not talk of it; and I have yet a part to play"—he shivered again, and covered his eyes. "Great heavens," he cried—"the horror of it—the bitter, bitter shame!"

He told me, as I was leaving him, that he should remain in the library.

"But I can bear the solitude now," he said—"now that you have given me strength, Vida."

I hurried to my room, and crept into bed in the dark. Nellie half awoke, and sleepily asked me what time it was. I muttered some inarticulate reply, and she went off to sleep again; but I lay wide awake. The events of that night—the anticipation of what was to come—had driven all sleep from my eyes—and I lay longing

for the dawn—that dawn which would fall “gray and sad” on the form of a dead woman, lying out yonder among the trees.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN Nellie and I met Bertram Darrell in the breakfast-room that morning, only my eyes could have detected any change in him. I gave him one swift, covert glance, asking a question, and his answering look told me that no discovery had been made. There was not, indeed, likely to be any; hardly any one passed through that plantation from year's end to year's end.

After breakfast Bertram said he was going out for a little while, and my heart seemed to turn to lead within me, for I knew the object of his walk.

“I may not return before luncheon,” he added “Adieu until then.”

The dogs sprung up, as their master turned to the door, and he allowed them to follow him out.

What an effort it was to appear my usual self that morning—to go from room to room with Nellie, to look, admire, and explain, when every nerve was on the rack, when I was listening for every sound, when all my thoughts were away in that dismal plantation, and I was waiting and watching to hear of what had happened there!

It was about eleven o'clock, and Nellie and I were in the picture-gallery, when I heard hurried steps, and, looking toward the entrance, saw Lucy—the maid who attended especially to my rooms. I knew at once what she was going to say—that glance at her scared face had told me that.

“Oh, miss,” she began breathlessly, before she reached the spot where we stood. I went forward to meet her.

“What is the matter, Lucy?” I asked. “Has anything happened?”

“Oh, miss—such a dreadful thing!”

“Dreadful thing? What can you mean?” cried Nellie, hurrying up.

“In the plantation, miss!” panted Lucy, putting her hand to her side. “Master found a woman—a poor woman, quite dead—isn't it dreadful?”

“A woman—dead?” repeated Nellie, in a shocked tone. “Are you sure of it?”

“Oh, yes, miss! He's come back, and sent some of the stablemen to fetch her, and lay her in one of the outhouses, he said, until she could be sent to the village; and John has ridden off to tell the constable. It does seem shocking to bring her here—doesn't it, miss?”

“No,” I replied; “it is right to treat the dead with honor, be they who they may. Did Mr. Darrell go back with the men?”

“No, miss—he's in the study, I think. But he sent the head groom with them, for fear, I suppose, the other men wouldn't be careful of the woman. It must be some beggar, I suppose. Will there be an inquest, miss?”

"Of course. Did Mr. Darrell say he had any idea there had been foul play?"

"I don't think so, miss. It was Mrs. Ellis told me, and master only said the woman was dead, and John was to ride to Langton to tell the constable. That's all I know."

"I shall go and ask Mr. Darrell about it," I said, and I quitted the gallery, Nellie following me as far as the library. At the door she caught my hand.

"You'll come and tell me about it as soon as you can?" she asked.

"Yes," I answered; and went on to the study.

For the first time I omitted the preliminary knock, and gently opening the door, entered.

Bertram Darrell, who was sitting by the table, lifted a deathly face to mine.

"Well," he said quietly, "are you come to ask me about this morning's work?"

I went round to him, and paused at his side.

"Yes," I replied.

"I can speak the truth," he said, in the same quiet, almost dreary manner, and not looking at me, "when they question me. It was Hubert that found her. He had bounded on before me, through the trees, and in a minute I heard him baying. I followed the sound —and the rest you know. How did you hear of it?"

"Lucy told me. She said you had sent to have her brought here."

I did not stay long with him, but went back to Nellie, and told her how the poor woman had been found.

"What sort of woman did she seem?" asked Nellie. If she had only known how she tortured me by her questions!

"Above the peasant class," I answered; "evidently a woman of dissipated life!"

"Poor, miserable creature!" said Nellie pityingly. "She must have felt herself dying, and have crept aside from the road into that shelter."

That evening the constable and the coroner's officer came to the Chase and saw Mr. Darrell, and a shell was sent for the remains of Emma Trevor. The inquest, I afterward ascertained, would be opened the day after to-morrow.

Who could know that a life's tragedy was inclosed in the prosaic record that appeared three days later in a daily paper under the head of "Inquests?"

"Yesterday, Mr. Harknell, coroner for West Marlshire, opened an inquest at the village of Langton, on the body of a woman, name unknown, who was found dead in a plantation on the estate of Mr. Bertram L. Darrell, of Langton Chase. The medical evidence made it clear that deceased had died from alcoholic poisoning, the effects of long-continued intemperance. Mr. Darrell, of Langton Chase, deposed to finding the body in the plantation on the morning of the —th inst. There was no evidence to show who the woman was, or how she came to be in the plantation. A verdict in accordance with the medical evidence was returned. Mr. Darrell stated his willing-

ness to defray the cost of the interment of the deceased, she having died on his property, and the generous offer was at once accepted."

Yet it was Bertram Darrell's wife who lay in the parish shell, who would have rested in a pauper's grave but for the "generosity" of the man whose life she had ruined!

The evening of the day following the inquest she was buried, decently and reverently, though no mourner stood by; and in that nameless grave the secret of two lives was buried forever. An unknown tramp had died by the roadside, and a generous landowner had provided decent burial for her—that was all that would ever be known of Bertram Darrell's long agony—of the life his wife had lived, and the death she had died.

The days passed on, to all appearance, as usual. Bertram Darrell and I were naturally, now that Nellie was here, rarely alone together, and never for long; and, when we were alone, he made no allusion to the dead, nor spoke a word concerning what we both felt—our changed relations to each other. There was even, somehow, more reticence in his manner to me than there used to be. He would just put his hand on my shoulder and kiss my forehead, sometimes only my hand; but he did not take me in his arms, or address to me the endearing terms he had used lately; yet, though there was no indication to other eyes than mine that a load was lifted from his life, I could see that cruel shackles had fallen from his wrists. Perhaps, like a prisoner suddenly released after years of incarceration, the light dazzled and blinded him; he could hardly yet grasp the blessed truth that he was loosed from a degrading bondage—free once more to face the world without fear of dishonor—free to love and be loved; once more life opened up before him, almost as on the threshold of youth, bright with endless possibilities; once more he could enter the arena of ambition, and lift his head among his fellows, and look around him with a gaze that need never quail nor waver. There must be a great joy in his heart, hide as he would its signs; and conscience could not condemn that joy as sinful or even unseemly.

Nellie's visit was drawing to a close; in a few days she would return to Wales. We were talking about this one evening in the library after tea; but I noticed that Bertram did not say much; he seemed thoughtful and abstracted. Presently Nellie rose to leave the room, and I was about to follow, when Bertram, who was leaning against the mantel-piece, looked up, and said rather quickly—

"Vida, if Nellie can spare you, I want you for a few minutes."

"Very well," said Nellie; "I shall try that new song you gave me, sister mine;" and she went out.

I paused near the door, seized with a sudden timidity—my heart beating fast, I hardly knew why.

"Vida," Bertram began softly, "come to me!" I turned slowly, not lifting my eyes. He stretched out his hands to me. "Come," he said, almost impatiently; and I went, half shrinking—yet, ah, how gladly!

He took me in his arms, folding me to his breast, covering my face with passionate kisses, and for some minutes he spoke not a

word, only holding me to his heart. Presently he said in a low trembling voice—

" You must forgive me, Vida. Have I too soon yielded to the delight of clasping you to me again? No!"—for I laid my head against him in mute answer to his question. " Then, my darling, may I not speak to you of the future?"

I started, and had shrunk from him; but he drew me to the settle, and made me sit down by him, folding me close to him again.

" Vida," he continued, " how long must I wait for you? You must not be hard with me. We owe nothing to the world in this—only we two know of the barrier that was between us. Think how cruelly long the days will be without you, Vida, and deal mercifully with me."

My heart throbbed as if it would suffocate me; my brain felt dazed. How could I answer him? What was the right thing to do? Ought I to make him suffer out of a false idea of respect to the memory of one to whom he owed nothing—of whose very existence as his wife the world had always been ignorant, so that, as he justly said, the world's opinion need not concern either of us? At length—not lifting my head—I whispered—

" Let it be six months, if you will."

He started.

" So long—oh, Vida!" He bent over me and pressed his lips to my forehead. " Dear one," he went on, pleadingly, " you will not condemn me to such long waiting. Let it be three months, Vida."

I raised my eyes to his, and the look I met must have conquered me, if his words had failed. There was no need for me to speak my answer, he read it in my face, and thanked me with a long, fervent kiss.

Presently—I am afraid it was fully an hour—we went up to the drawing-room, and Nellie looked up from the depths of an arm-chair near the fire, where she was ensconced with a novel.

" Well," said Bertram, smiling; " do you think I kept your sister an unconscionable time?"

I remained somewhat in the background. I do not think there was any undue color in my face; but I felt guilty.

" I should not be so impertinent," Nellie responded brightly.

" You think I have a right to her?" Bertram observed; and, sitting down by my sister, he laid his hand on hers and added, half gravely, half jestingly, " Then you would not refuse to let me keep her altogether?"

Nellie gave one quick, wondering glance into his face; then she turned to me.

" Mr. Darrell," she began—" Vida—" and stopped. He smiled again.

" It is not so strange, is it, Nellie, that I should love her?" he asked—" and she—Vida, come here, my child." I went to him obediently, and knelt down by him, and he put his arm about me, and drew my glowing face down upon his breast. " She," he went on softly, laying a caressing hand on my hair, " loves me, Nellie. Are you willing to let me have her?"

" Willing!" cried Nellie, almost weeping for gladness—my dear old Nell! " Oh, Mr. Darrell, you don't know how happy I am. I

thought there never could be a man good enough for Vida; but I changed my mind when I knew you, I did indeed!"

I could not help laughing at this, but Bertram shook his head.

"It is very good of you, Nellie," he said, putting his disengaged arm round Nellie, "to think so well of me; but I am not vain enough to endorse your favorable opinion. I can promise you to do my utmost to make her happy; and, as you will be my sister soon, I shall claim a brother's right."

He drew Nellie to him, and kissed her gravely and tenderly, and her dear heart was so full that she could not speak. And then came the culminating point. Bertram told her she must give notice to her employers as soon as she went back; but she was only to stay till they were suited, and he would make matters right; but she was to come and live with us, in three months' time.

That evening I knew what perfect happiness meant. I do not think it would be possible in this life to be more happy than I was then, leaning on my lover's breast, with my darling sister close by, knowing that I was to be always henceforth with these two who so loved me, and whom I loved with all my soul.

We none of us talked much, only about the immediate future, and, when that was settled, we were silent again.

Nellie and I were to go to London, my sister joining me as soon as she could; and in a few weeks Bertram would place me under the care of a relative of his own, from whose house I was to be married. Bertram arranged all this, and I acquiesced; whatever he wished, I wished also.

"How strange," Nellie remarked to me that night, when we were alone, "that all this should have come out of your answering that advertisement. It is like an incident in one of your novels, Vida."

Two days later I left Langton Chase, and went up to London. The fortnight that elapsed before Nellie joined me was the longest part of the three months; for, of course, Bertram Darrell did not come to see me, though he wrote frequently. Shortly after Nellie came up, we went to stay with Lady Montdene, Bertram's cousin, and then he came up to town, and we saw each other every day. There was a great deal of talk in society about Bertram Darrell's approaching marriage, and Lady Montdene wanted to make a fuss over it; but this neither he nor I would hear of; it was to be very quiet, and only Nellie and Lady Montdene's daughter were to be bride-maids, and, instead of being married in town, the ceremony would take place in the country, at Lady Montdene's seat in Devonshire.

I used to be amused in reading, in some of the "society" papers, statements concerning where and how Bertram Darrell met me. One of them asserted that we crossed from Calais in the same boat, and it was a case of love at first sight; another that he had known me when Nellie and I were living in Paris with our father. But even Lady Montdene never knew the exact truth. She thought I had been introduced to him as a literary aspirant, and that he had been struck with me and had followed it up; and she was never contradicted. There was a germ of truth in her impression, only she did not go far enough.

It was a lovely day in early April when I stood by Bertram Darrell's side at the altar; and afterward we went abroad, to visit some of the places where he used to wander alone in the dreary years past; and in September we came home to Langton Chase, and there was dear old Nell to welcome us, and Mrs. Ellis, and all the servants looking as happy as possible, and the three dogs wild with delight. There were grand doings among the tenantry of course; and they knew that this was only the dawn of the good times to come. The Chase would be no longer the home of a recluse, but would be a center of hospitality.

When we were alone together, my husband and I, that night of our return home, we sat in the library, the room that would ever be dearer to both of us than any other in the house—the room in which I had worked as Mr. Darrell's secretary, in which he had first told me he loved me, where I had waited and watched for him, where we had both suffered so much, and known such deep true happiness. And now once more we were here together, husband and wife, and he whispered to me, while he tenderly caressed me, that all the black terrible past seemed to him sometimes like a dream; his youth had come back to him in my love, and with renewed strength and the help of Heaven he would redeem the past years.

I nestled closer to his breast, and lifted my face to meet his kiss, my heart too full to answer him in words, but knowing how little needed they were between us two, so bound together in perfect love and sympathy that our lives were indeed as one.

THE END.

JAMES PYLE'S



THE BEST

Washing Compound

EVER INVENTED.

No Lady, Married or Single, Rich or Poor, House-keeping or Boarding, will be without it after testing its utility.

Sold by all first-class Grocers, but beware of worthless imitations.

PEARLINE

A NEW BOOK FOR LADIES.

CUTTING-OUT AND DRESSMAKING.

FROM THE FRENCH OF

MLLE. E. GRAND'HOMME.

Full Directions for Cutting Every Garment Worn by Ladies,

WITH NUMEROUS DIAGRAMS.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

How to Take Measures, Verification of the Measurements, Variable Measures used as Supplementary to the Fixed Measures, Variable Measures not forming Rectangular Diagrams, Drafts of Patterns of Dresses, Verification of the Patterns for a Body, Dresses for Young Girls and Children, General Directions for Preparing a Dress or other Garment before making it up. Dress with Basque, Dressing-gown, Low Body with round waist, Caraco, Pelerine, How to Transpose Measures, Chemise, Drawers, Aprons, etc., etc.

PRICE 25 CENTS.

GEORGE MUNRO, Publisher,

(P. O. Box 8751.)

17 to 27 Vandewater St., New York.

MUNRO'S PUBLICATIONS.

THE SEASIDE LIBRARY.

Pocket Edition.

The following books are for sale by all newsdealers, or will be sent to any address, postage prepaid, by the publisher, on receipt of 12 cents for single numbers, and 25 cents for double numbers. Parties within reach of newsdealers will please get the books through them and thus avoid paying extra for postage. Those wishing the *Pocket Edition* of THE SEASIDE LIBRARY must be careful to mention the Pocket Edition, otherwise the Ordinary Edition will be sent.

Newsdealers wishing catalogues of THE SEASIDE LIBRARY, Pocket Edition, bearing their imprint, will be supplied on sending their names, addresses, and number required, to

GEORGE MUNRO, Publisher,

P. O. Box 3751.

17 to 27 Vandewater Street.

NO.	PRICE.	NO.	PRICE.
1 Yolande. By William Black....	20	24 Pickwick Papers. By Charles Dickens. Vol. I.....	20
2 Molly Bawn. By "The Duchess".....	20	24 Pickwick Papers. By Charles Dickens. Vol. II.....	20
3 The Mill on the Floss. By George Eliot.....	20	25 Mrs. Geoffrey. By "The Duchess".....	20
4 Under Two Flags. By "Ouida".....	20	26 Monsieur Lecoq. By Emile Gaboriau. Vol. I.....	20
5 The Admiral's Ward. By Mrs. Alexander.....	20	26 Monsieur Lecoq. By Emile Gaboriau. Vol. II.....	20
6 Portia. By "The Duchess".....	20	27 Vanity Fair. By William M. Thackeray.....	20
7 File No. 113. By Emile Gaboriau.....	20	28 Ivanhoe. By Sir Walter Scott, Bart.....	20
8 East Lynne. By Mrs. Henry Wood.....	20	29 Beauty's Daughters. By "The Duchess".....	10
9 Wanda, Countess von Szalras. By "Ouida".....	20	30 Faith and Unfaith. By "The Duchess".....	20
10 The Old Curiosity Shop. By Charles Dickens.....	20	31 Middlemarch. By George Eliot.	20
11 John Halifax, Gentleman. By Miss Mulock.....	20	32 The Land Leaguers. By Anthony Trollope.....	20
12 Other People's Money. By Emile Gaboriau.....	20	33 The Clique of Gold. By Emile Gaboriau.....	10
13 Eyre's Acquittal. By Helen B. Mathers.....	10	34 Daniel Deronda. By George Eliot.....	30
14 Airy Fairy Lilian. By "The Duchess".....	10	35 Lady Audley's Secret. By Miss M. E. Braddon.....	20
15 Jane Eyre. By Charlotte Bronté	20	36 Adam Bede. By George Eliot ..	20
16 Phyllis. By "The Duchess"....	20	37 Nicholas Nickleby. By Charles Dickens. First half.....	20
17 The Wooing O't. By Mrs. Alexander.....	20	37 Nicholas Nickleby. By Charles Dickens. Second half	20
18 Shandon Bells. By William Black.....	20	38 The Widow Lerouge. By Emile Gaboriau	20
19 Her Mother's Sin. By the author of "Dora Thorne".....	10	39 In Silk Attire. By William Black.....	20
20 Within an Inch of His Life. By Emile Gaboriau.....	20	40 The Last Days of Pompeii. By Bulwer Lytton.....	20
21 Sunrise: A Story of These Times. By William Black.....	20	41 Oliver Twist. By Charles Dickens.....	20
22 David Copperfield. By Charles Dickens. Vol. I.....	20	42 Romola. By George Eliot.....	20
22 David Copperfield. By Charles Dickens. Vol. II.....	20	43 The Mystery of Orcival. By Emile Gaboriau.....	20
23 A Princess of Thule. By William Black.....	20		

THE SEASIDE LIBRARY.—Pocket Edition.

NO.		PRICE.	NO.		PRICE.
44	Macleod of Dare. By William Black.	20	80	June. By Mrs. Forrester.	20
45	A Little Pilgrim. By Mrs. Olyphant.	10	81	A Daughter of Heth. By Wm. Black.	20
46	Very Hard Cash. By Charles Reade.	20	82	Sealed Lips. By Fortuné Du Boisgobey.	20
47	Altiora Peto. By Laurence Olyphant.	20	83	A Strange Story. By Sir E. Bulwer Lytton.	20
48	Thicker Than Water. By James Payn.	20	84	Hard Times. By Charles Dickens.	10
49	That Beautiful Wretch. By William Black.	20	85	A Sea Queen. By W. Clark Russell.	20
50	The Strange Adventures of a Phaeton. By William Black.	20	86	Belinda. By Rhoda Broughton	20
51	Dora Thorne. By the author of "Her Mother's Sin"	20	87	Dick Sand; or, A Captain at Fifteen. By Jules Verne.	20
52	The New Magdalen. By Wilkie Collins.	10	88	The Privateersman. By Captain Marryat.	20
53	The Story of Ida. By Francesca	10	89	The Red Eric. By R. M. Ballantyne.	10
54	A Broken Wedding-Ring. By the author of "Dora Thorne"	20	90	Ernest Maltravers. By Sir E. Bulwer Lytton.	20
55	The Three Guardsmen. By Alexander Dumas.	20	91	Barnaby Rudge. By Charles Dickens.	20
56	Phantom Fortune. By Miss M. E. Braddon.	20	92	Lord Lynne's Choice. By the author of "Dora Thorne"	10
57	Shirley. By Charlotte Bronté.	20	93	Anthony Trollope's Autobiography.	20
58	By the Gate of the Sea. By D. Christie Murray.	10	94	Little Dorrit. By Charles Dickens. First half.	20
59	Vice Versâ. By F. Anstey.	20	94	Little Dorrit. By Charles Dickens. Second half.	20
60	The Last of the Mohicans. By J. Fenimore Cooper.	20	95	The Fire Brigade. By R. M. Ballantyne.	10
61	Charlotte Temple. By Mrs. Rowson.	10	96	Erling the Bold. By R. M. Ballantyne.	10
62	The Executor. By Mrs. Alexander.	20	97	All in a Garden Fair. By Walter Besant.	20
63	The Spy. By J. Fenimore Cooper.	20	98	A Woman-Hater. By Charles Reade.	20
64	A Maiden Fair. By Charles Gibbon.	10	99	Barbara's History. By Amelia B. Edwards.	20
65	Back to the Old Home. By Mary Cecil Hay.	10	100	20,000 Leagues Under the Seas. By Jules Verne.	20
66	The Romance of a Poor Young Man. By Octave Feuillet.	10	101	Second Thoughts. By Rhoda Broughton.	20
67	Lorna Doone. By R. D. Blackmore.	30	102	The Moonstone. By Wilkie Collins.	20
68	A Queen Amongst Women. By the author of "Dora Thorne"	10	103	Rose Fleming. By Dora Russell	10
69	Madolin's Lover. By the author of "Dora Thorne"	20	104	The Coral Pin. By F. Du Boisgobey.	30
70	White Wings: A Yachting Romance. By William Black.	10	105	A Noble Wife. By John Saunders.	20
71	A Struggle for Fame. By Mrs. J. H. Riddell.	20	106	Bleak House. By Charles Dickens. First half.	20
72	Old Myddelton's Money. By Mary Cecil Hay.	20	106	Bleak House. By Charles Dickens. Second half.	20
73	Redeemed by Love. By the author of "Dora Thorne"	20	107	Dombey and Son. By Charles Dickens.	40
74	Aurora Floyd. By Miss M. E. Braddon.	20	108	The Cricket on the Hearth, and Doctor Marigold. By Charles Dickens.	10
75	Twenty Years After. By Alexander Dumas.	20	109	Little Loo. By W. Clark Russell.	20
76	Wife in Name Only. By the author of "Dora Thorne"	20	110	Under the Red Flag. By Miss M. E. Braddon.	10
77	A Tale of Two Cities. By Chas. Dickens.	20	111	The Little School-master Mark. By J. H. Shorthouse.	10
78	Madcap Violet. By Wm. Black	20	112	The Waters of Marah. By John Hill.	20
79	Wedded and Parted. By the author of "Dora Thorne"	10			

THE SEASIDE LIBRARY.—Pocket Edition.

NO.	PRICE.	NO.	PRICE.
113 Mrs. Carr's Companion. By M. G. Wightwick	10	149 The Captain's Daughter. From the Russian of Pushkin	10
114 Some of Our Girls. By Mrs. C. J. Eiloart.	20	150 For Himself Alone. By T. W. Speight.....	10
115 Diamond Cut Diamond. By T. Adolphus Trollope.....	10	151 The Duccie Diamonds. By C. Blatherwick.....	10
116 Moths. By "Ouida".....	20	152 The Uncommercial Traveler. By Charles Dickens.....	20
117 A Tale of the Shore and Ocean. By W. H. G. Kingston.....	20	153 The Golden Calf. By Miss M. E. Braddon.....	20
118 Loys, Lord Berresford, and Eric Dering. By "The Duchess"	10	154 Annan Water. By Robert Bu chanan.....	20
119 Monica, and A Rose Distill'd. By "The Duchess"	10	155 Lady Muriel's Secret. By Jean Middlemas	20
120 Tom Brown's School Days at Rugby. By Thomas Hughes	20	156 "For a Dream's Sake." By Mrs. Herbert Martin	20
121 Maid of Athens. By Justin Mc Carthy.	20	157 Milly's Hero. By F. W. Robin son.....	20
122 Ione Stewart. By Mrs. E. Lynn Linton.	20	158 The Starling. By Norman Mac leod, D.D.....	10
123 Sweet is True Love. By "The Duchess"	10	159 A Moment of Madness, and Other Stories. By Florence Marryat.....	10
124 Three Feathers. By William Black	20	160 Her Gentle Deeds. By Sarah Tytler	10
125 The Monarch of Mincing Lane. By William Black.....	20	161 The Lady of Lyons. Founded on the Play of that title by Lord Lytton.....	10
126 Kilmeny. By William Black	20	162 Eugene Aram. By Sir E. Bul wer Lytton	20
127 Adrian Bright. By Mrs. Caddy	20	163 Winifred Power. By Joyce Dar rell	20
128 Afternoon, and Other Sketches. By "Ouida"	10	164 Leila; or, The Siege of Grenada. By Sir E. Bulwer Lytton	10
129 Rossmoyne. By "The Duch ess"	10	165 The History of Henry Esmond. By William Makepeace Thack eray.....	20
130 The Last of the Barons. Bulwer Lytton. 1st and 2d half, each	20	166 Moonshine and Marguerites. By "The Duchess"	10
131 Our Mutual Friend. By Charles Dickens. 1st and 2d half, each	20	167 Heart and Science. By Wilkie Collins	20
132 Master Humphrey's Clock. By Charles Dickens.....	10	168 No Thoroughfare. By Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins...	10
133 Peter the Whaler. By W. H. G. Kingston	10	169 The Haunted Man. By Charles Dickens.....	10
134 The Witching Hour. By "The Duchess"	10	170 A Great Treason. By Mary Hoppus	30
135 A Great Heiress. By R. E. Fran cillon	10	171 Fortune's Wheel, and Other Stories. By "The Duchess"	10
136 "That Last Rehearsal." By "The Duchess"	10	172 "Golden Girls." By Alan Muir	20
137 Uncle Jack. By Walter Besant	10	173 The Foreigners. By Eleanor C. Price	20
138 Green Pastures and Piccadilly. By William Black	20	174 Under a Ban. By Mrs. Lodge	20
139 The Romantic Adventures of a Milkmaid. By Thomas Hardy	10	175 Love's Random Shot, and Other Stories. By Wilkie Collins	10
140 A Glorious Fortune. By Walter Besant	10	176 An April Day. By Philippa P. Jephson	10
141 She Loved Him! By Annie Thomas	10	177 Salem Chapel. By Mrs. Oliphant	20
142 Jenifer. By Annie Thomas	20	178 More Leaves from the Journal of a Life in the Highlands. By Queen Victoria	10
143 One False, Both Fair. J. B. Harwood	20	179 Little Make Believe. By B. L. Farjeon	10
144 Promises of Marriage. By Emile Gaboriau	10	180 Round the Galley Fire. By W. Clark Russell	10
145 "Storm-Beaten:" God and The Man. By Robert Buchanan	20	181 The New Abelard. By Robert Buchanan	10
146 Love Finds the Way. By Walter Besant and James Rice	10	182 The Millionaire. A Novel.....	20
147 Rachel Ray. By Anthony Trol lope	20		
148 Thorns and Orange Blossoms. By the author of "Dora Thorne"	10		

THE SEASIDE LIBRARY.—Pocket Edition.

NO.	PRICE.	NO.	PRICE.
183 Old Contrairy, and Other Stories. By Florence Marryat...	10	220 Which Loved Him Best? By the author of "Dora Thorne"	10
184 Thirly Hall. By W. E. Norris.	20	221 Comin' Thro' the Rye. By Helen B. Mathers.	20
185 Dita. By Lady Margaret Majejdie	10	222 The Sun-Maid. By Miss Grant	20
186 The Canon's Ward. By James Payn.....	20	223 A Sailor's Sweetheart. By W. Clark Russell.....	20
187 The Midnight Sun. By Fredrika Bremer.....	10	224 The Arundel Motto. Mary Cecil Hay	20
188 Idonea. By Anne Beale.....	20	225 The Giant's Robe. By F. Anstey	20
189 Valerie's Fate. Mrs. Alexander	10	226 Friendship. By "Ouida"	20
190 Romance of a Black Veil. By the author of "Dora Thorne"	10	227 Nancy. By Rhoda Broughton	20
191 Harry Lorrequer. By Charles Lever.....	20	228 Princess Napraxine. By "Ouida"	20
192 At the World's Mercy. By F. Warden.....	10	229 Maid, Wife, or Widow? By Mrs. Alexander.....	10
193 The Rosary Folk. By G. Manville Fenn.....	10	230 Dorothy Forster. By Walter Besant.....	20
194 "So Near, and Yet So Far!" By Alison.....	10	231 Griffith Gaunt. Charles Reade	20
195 "The Way of the World." By David Christie Murray.....	20	232 Love and Money; or, A Perilous Secret. By Charles Reade...	10
196 Hidden Perils. By Mary Cecil Hay.....	10	233 "I Say No;" or, the Love-Letter Answered. Wilkie Collins....	20
197 For Her Dear Sake. By Mary Cecil Hay.....	20	234 Barbara; or, Splendid Misery. Miss M. E. Braddon.....	20
198 A Husband's Story.....	10	235 "It is Never Too Late to Mend." By Charles Reade...	20
199 The Fisher Village. By Anne Beale.....	10	236 Which Shall It Be? Mrs. Alexander.....	20
200 An Old Man's Love. By Anthony Trollope.....	10	237 Repented at Leisure. By the author of "Dora Thorne" ...	20
201 The Monastery. By Sir Walter Scott.....	20	238 Pasarel. By "Ouida"	20
202 The Abbot. By Sir Walter Scott	20	239 Signa. By "Ouida"	20
203 John Bull and His Island. By Max O'Rell.....	10	240 Called Back. By Hugh Conway	10
204 Vixen. By Miss M. E. Braddon	20	241 The Baby's Grandmother. By L. B. Walford.....	10
205 The Minister's Wife. By Mrs. Oliphant.....	30	242 The Two Orphans. By D'Ennery	10
206 The Picture, and Jack of All Trades. By Charles Reade..	10	243 Tom Burke of "Ours." First half. By Charles Lever.....	20
207 Pretty Miss Neville. By B. M. Croker.....	20	243 Tom Burke of "Ours." Second half. By Charles Lever.....	20
208 The Ghost of Charlotte Cray, and Other Stories. By Florence Marryat.....	10	244 A Great Mistake. By the author of "His Wedded Wife".....	20
209 John Holdsworth, Chief Mate. By W. Clark Russell.....	10	245 Miss Tommy, and In a House-Boat. By Miss Mulock.....	10
210 Readiana: Comments on Current Events. By Chas. Reade	10	246 A Fatal Dower. By the author of "His Wedded Wife".....	10
211 The Octoroon. By Miss M. E. Braddon.....	10	247 The Armourer's Prentices. By Charlotte M. Yonge.....	10
212 Charles O'Malley, the Irish Dragoon. By Charles Lever. First and Second half, each..	20	248 The House on the Marsh. F. Warden.....	10
213 A Terrible Temptation. Chas. Reade.....	20	249 "Prince Charlie's Daughter." By author of "Dora Thorne"	10
214 Put Yourself in His Place. By Charles Reade.....	20	250 Sunshine and Roses; or, Diana's Discipline. By the author of "Dora Thorne"	10
215 Not Like Other Girls. By Rosa Nouchette Carey.....	20	251 The Daughter of the Stars, and Other Tales. By Hugh Conway, author of "Called Back"	10
216 Foul Play. By Charles Reade.	20	252 A Sinless Secret. By "Rita"	10
217 The Man She Cared For. By F. W. Robinson.....	20	253 The Amazon. By Carl Vosmaer	10
218 Agnes Sorel. By G. P. R. James	20	254 The Wife's Secret, and Fair but False. By the author of "Dora Thorne"	10
219 Lady Clare; or, The Master of the Forges. By Georges Ohnet	10	255 The Mystery. By Mrs. Henry Wood.....	20
		256 Mr. Smith: A Part of His Life. By L. B. Walford.....	20

THE SEASIDE LIBRARY.—Pocket Edition.

NO.	PRICE.	NO.	PRICE.
257 Beyond Recall. By Adeline Sergeant.....	10	285 The Gambler's Wife.....	20
258 Cousins. By L. B. Walford.....	20	286 Deldee; or, The Iron Hand. By F. Warden.....	20
259 The Bride of Monte-Cristo. (A Sequel to "The Count of Monte-Cristo.") By Alexander Dumas.....	10	287 At War With Herself. By the author of "Dora Thorne"....	10
260 Proper Pride. By B. M. Croker	10	288 From Gloom to Sunlight. By the author of "Dora Thorne"....	10
261 A Fair Maid. By F. W. Robinson	20	289 John Bull's Neighbor in Her True Light. By a "Brutal Saxon".....	10
262 The Count of Monte-Cristo. Part I. By Alexander Dumas	20	290 Nora's Love Test. By Mary Cecil Hay.....	20
262 The Count of Monte-Cristo. Part II. By Alexander Dumas	20	291 Love's Warfare. By the author of "Dora Thorne".....	10
263 An Ishmaelite. By Miss M. E. Braddon	20	292 A Golden Heart. By the author of "Dora Thorne".....	10
264 Piédouche, A French Detective. By Fortuné Du Boisgobey....	10	293 The Shadow of a Sin. By the author of "Dora Thorne"....	10
265 Judith Shakespeare: Her Love Affairs and Other Adventures. By William Black.....	20	294 Hilda. By the author of "Dora Thorne".....	10
266 The Water-Babies. A Fairy Tale for a Land-Baby. By the Rev. Charles Kingsley.....	10	295 A Woman's War. By the author of "Dora Thorne".....	10
267 Laurel Vane; or, The Girls' Conspiracy. By Mrs. Alex. McVeigh Miller.....	20	296 A Rose in Thorns. By the author of "Dora Thorne".....	10
268 Lady Gay's Pride; or, The Miser's Treasure. By Mrs. Alex. McVeigh Miller.....	20	297 Hilary's Folly. By the author of "Dora Thorne".....	10
269 Lancaster's Choice. By Mrs. Alex. McVeigh Miller.....	20	298 Mitchelhurst Place. By Margaret Veley.....	10
270 The Wandering Jew. Part I. By Eugene Sue.....	20	299 The Fatal Lilies, and A Bride from the Sea. By the author of "Dora Thorne".....	10
270 The Wandering Jew. Part II. By Eugene Sue.....	20	300 A Gilded Sin, and A Bridge of Love. By the author of "Dora Thorne".....	10
271 The Mysteries of Paris. Part I. By Eugene Sue.....	20	301 Dark Days. By Hugh Conway.	10
271 The Mysteries of Paris. Part II. By Eugene Sue.....	20	302 The Blatchford Bequest. By Hugh Conway.....	10
272 The Little Savage. By Captain Marryat.....	10	303 Ingledew House, and More Bitter than Death. By the author of "Dora Thorne".....	10
273 Love and Mirage; or, The Waiting on an Island. By M. Betham Edwards.....	10	304 In Cupid's Net. By the author of "Dora Thorne".....	10
274 Alice, Grand Duchess of Hesse, Princess of Great Britain and Ireland. Biographical Sketch and Letters.....	10	305 A Dead Heart, and Lady Gwen doline's Dream. By the author of "Dora Thorne".....	10
275 The Three Brides. Charlotte M. Yonge.....	10	306 A Golden Dawn, and Love for a Day. By the author of "Dora Thorne".....	10
276 Under the Lilies and Roses. By Florence Marryat (Mrs. Francis Lean).....	10	307 Two Kisses, and Like No Other Love. By the author of "Dora Thorne".....	10
277 The Surgeon's Daughters. By Mrs. Henry Wood. A Man of His Word. By W. E. Norris.	10	308 Beyond Pardon.....	20
278 For Life and Love. By Alison.	10	309 The Pathfinder. By J. Fenimore Cooper.....	20
279 Little Goldie. Mrs. Sumner Hayden.....	20	310 The Prairie. By J. Fenimore Cooper.....	20
280 Omnia Vanitas. A Tale of Society. By Mrs. Forrester.....	10	311 Two Years Before the Mast. By R. H. Dana, Jr.....	20
281 The Squire's Legacy. By Mary Cecil Hay	20	312 A Week in Killarney. By "The Duchess".....	10
282 Donal Grant. By George Mac Donald.....	20	313 The Lover's Creed. By Mrs. Cashel Hoey.....	20
283 The Sin of a Lifetime. By the author of "Dora Thorne"....	10	314 Peril. By Jessie Fothergill....	20
284 Doris. By "The Duchess" ..	10	315 The Mistletoe Bough. Edited by Miss M. E. Braddon.....	20
		316 Sworn to Silence; or, Aline Rodney's Secret. By Mrs. Alex. McVeigh Miller.....	20

THE SEASIDE LIBRARY.—Pocket Edition.

NO.	PRICE.	NO.	PRICE.
317 By Mead and Stream. Charles Gibbon.....	20	349 The Two Admirals. A Tale of the Sea. By J. Fenimore Cooper.....	20
318 The Pioneers; or, The Sources of the Susquehanna. By J. Fenimore Cooper.....	20	350 Diana of the Crossways. By George Meredith.....	10
319 Face to Face: A Fact in Seven Fables. By R. E. Francillon. 10	10	351 The House on the Moor. By Mrs. Oliphant.....	20
320 A Bit of Human Nature. By David Christie Murray.....	10	352 At Any Cost. By Edward Garrett.....	10
321 The Prodigals: And Their Inheritance. By Mrs. Oliphant 10	10	353 The Black Dwarf, and A Legend of Montrose. By Sir Walter Scott.....	20
322 A Woman's Love-Story.....	10	354 The Lottery of Life. A Story of New York Twenty Years Ago. By John Brougham. 20	20
323 A Willful Maid.....	20	355 That Terrible Man. By W. E. Norris. The Princess Dago mar of Poland. By Heinrich Felbermann.....	10
324 In Luck at Last. By Walter Besant.....	10	356 A Good Hater. By Frederick Boyle.....	20
325 The Portent. By George Macdonald.....	10	357 John. A Love Story. By Mrs. Oliphant.....	20
326 Phantastes. A Faerie Romance for Men and Women. By George Macdonald.....	10	358 Within the Clasp. By J. Berwick Harwood.....	20
327 Raymond's Atonement. (From the German of E. Werner.) By Christina Tyrrell.....	20	359 The Water-Witch. By J. Fenimore Cooper.....	20
328 Babiole, the Pretty Milliner. By F. Du Boisgobey. First half. 20	20	360 Ropes of Sand. By R. E. Francillon.....	20
328 Babiole, the Pretty Milliner. By F. Du Boisgobey. Second half 20	20	361 The Red Rover. A Tale of the Sea. By J. Fenimore Cooper 20	20
329 The Polish Jew. By Erckmann-Chatrian.....	10	362 The Bride of Lammermoor. By Sir Walter Scott.....	20
330 May Blossom; or, Between Two Loves. By Margaret Lee....	20	363 The Surgeon's Daughter. By Sir Walter Scott.....	10
331 Gerald. By Eleanor C. Price..	20	364 Castle Dangerous. By Sir Walter Scott.....	10
332 Judith Wynne. A Novel....	20	365 George Christy; or, The Fortunes of a Minstrel. By Tony Pastor.....	20
333 Frank Fairleigh; or, Scenes from the Life of a Private Pupil. By Frank E. Smedley 20	20	366 The Mysterious Hunter; or, The Man of Death. By Capt. L. C. Carleton.....	20
334 A Marriage of Convenience. By Harriett Jay.....	10	367 Tie and Trick. By Hawley Smart 20	20
335 The White Witch. A Novel....	20	368 The Southern Star; or, The Diamond Land. By Jules Verne 20	20
336 Philistia. By Cecil Power ..	20	369 Miss Bretherton. By Mrs. Humphry Ward.....	10
337 Memoirs and Resolutions of Adam Graeme of Mossgray, Including Some Chronicles of the Borough of Fendie. By Mrs. Oliphant.....	20	370 Lucy Crofton. By Mrs. Oliphant 10	10
338 The Family Difficulty. By Sarah Doudney.....	10	371 Margaret Maitland. By Mrs. Oliphant.....	20
339 Mrs. Vereker's Courier Maid. By Mrs. Alexander.....	10	372 Phyllis' Probation. By the author of "His Wedded Wife". 10	10
340 Under Which King? By Compton Reade.....	20	373 Wing-and-Wing. J. Fenimore Cooper.....	20
341 Madolin Rivers; or, The Little Beauty of Red Oak Seminary. By Laura Jean Libbey.....	20	374 The Dead Man's Secret; or, The Adventures of a Medical Student. By Dr. Jupiter Paeon.. 20	20
342 The Baby, and One New Year's Eve. By "The Duchess"....	10	375 A Ride to Khiva. By Capt. Fred Burnaby, of the Royal Horse Guards.....	20
343 The Talk of the Town. By James Payn.....	20	376 The Crime of Christmas-Day. By the author of "My Ductats and My Daughter".....	10
344 "The Wearing of the Green." By Basil.....	20	377 Magdalen Hepburn: A Story of the Scottish Reformation. By Mrs. Oliphant.....	20
345 Madam. By Mrs. Oliphant...	20		
346 Tumbledown Farm. By Alan Muir.....	10		
347 As Avon Flows. By Henry Scott Vince.....	20		
348 From Post to Finish. A Racing Romance. By Hawley Smart 20	20		

THE SEASIDE LIBRARY.—Pocket Edition.

NO.	PRICE.	NO.	PRICE.
378 Homeward Bound; or, The Chase. J. Fenimore Cooper..	20	411 A Bitter Atonement. By Charlotte M. Braeme, author of "Dora Thorne".....	20
379 Home as Found. (Sequel to "Homeward Bound.") By J. Fenimore Cooper.....	20	412 Some One Else. By B. M. Croker	20
380 Wyandotte; or, The Huttled Knoll. J. Fenimore Cooper..	20	413 Afloat and Ashore. By J. Fenimore Cooper	20
381 The Red Cardinal. By Frances Elliot.....	10	414 Miles Wallingford. (Sequel to "Afloat and Ashore.") By J. Fenimore Cooper.....	20
382 Three Sisters; or, Sketches of a Highly Original Family. By Elsa D'Esterre-Keling...	10	415 The Ways of the Hour. By J. Fenimore Cooper.....	20
383 Introduced to Society. By Hamilton Aïdé	10	416 Jack Tier; or, The Florida Reef. By J. Fenimore Cooper	20
384 On Horseback Through Asia Minor. Capt. Fred Burnaby.	20	417 The Fair Maid of Perth; or, St. Valentine's Day. By Sir Walter Scott.....	20
385 The Headsman; or, The Abbaye des Vignerons. By J. Fenimore Cooper	20	418 St. Ronan's Well. By Sir Walter Scott.....	20
386 Led Astray; or, "La Petite Comtesse." By Octave Feuillet...	10	419 The Chainbearer; or, The Littlepage Manuscripts. By J. Fenimore Cooper.....	20
387 The Secret of the Cliffs. By Charlotte French.....	20	420 Satanstoe; or, The Littlepage Manuscripts. By J. Fenimore Cooper.....	20
388 Addie's Husband; or, Through Clouds to Sunshine. By the author of "Love or Lands?"	10	421 The Redskins; or, Indian and Injin. Being the conclusion of The Littlepage Manuscripts. J. Fenimore Cooper	20
389 Ichabod. By Bertha Thomas...	10	422 Precaution. J. Fenimore Cooper	20
390 Mildred Trevanion. By "The Duchess".....	10	423 The Sea-Lions; or, The Lost Sealers. J. Fenimore Cooper	20
391 The Heart of Mid-Lothian. By Sir Walter Scott.....	20	424 Mercedes of Castile; or, The Voyage to Cathay. By J. Fenimore Cooper.....	20
392 Peveril of the Peak. By Sir Walter Scott.....	20	425 The Oak Openings; or, The Bee-Hunter. J. Fenimore Cooper	20
393 The Pirate. By Sir Walter Scott	20	426 Venus's Doves. By Ida Ashworth Taylor.....	20
394 The Bravo. By J. Fenimore Cooper.....	20	427 The Remarkable History of Sir Thomas Upmore, Bart., M.P., formerly known as "Tommy Upmore." R. D. Blackmore.	20
395 The Archipelago on Fire. By Jules Verne.....	10	428 Zéro: A Story of Monte-Carlo. By Mrs. Campbell Praed....	10
396 Robert Ord's Atonement. By Rosa Nouchette Carey.....	20	429 Boulderstone; or, New Men and Old Populations. By William Sime.....	10
397 Lionel Lincoln; or, The Leaguer of Boston. By J. Fenimore Cooper.....	20	430 A Bitter Reckoning. By the author of "By Crooked Paths"	10
398 Matt: A Tale of a Caravan. By Robert Buchanan	10	431 The Monikins. By J. Fenimore Cooper	20
399 Miss Brown. By Vernon Lee..	20	432 The Witch's Head. By H. Rider Haggard	20
400 The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish. By J. Fenimore Cooper.....	20	433 My Sister Kate. By Charlotte M. Braeme, author of "Dora Thorne," and A Rainy June. By "Ouida".....	10
401 Waverley. By Sir Walter Scott	20	434 Wyllard's Weird. By Miss M. E. Braddon	20
402 Lilliesleaf; or, Passages in the Life of Mrs. Margaret Maitland of Sunnyside. By Mrs. Oliphant.....	20	435 Klytia: A Story of Heidelberg Castle. By George Taylor....	20
403 An English Squire. C. R. Coleridge.....	20	436 Stella. By Fanny Lewald.....	20
404 In Durance Vile, and Other Stories. By "The Duchess".	10	437 Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit. By Charles Dickens. First half.....	20
405 My Friends and I. Edited by Julian Sturgis.....	10	437 Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit. By Charles Dickens. Second half.....	20
406 The Merchant's Clerk. By Samuel Warren.....	10		
407 Tylney Hall. By Thomas Hood	20		
408 Lester's Secret. By Mary Cecil Hay.....	20		
409 Roy's Wife. By G. J. Whyte-Melville...	20		
410 Old Lady Mary. By Mrs. Oliphant.....	10		

THE SEASIDE LIBRARY.—Pocket Edition.

NO.	PRICE.	NO.	PRICE.
438 Found Out. Helen B. Mathers.	10	468 The Fortunes, Good and Bad, of a Sewing-Girl. By Charlotte M. Stanley	10
439 Great Expectations. By Chas. Dickens.....	20	469 Lady Damer's Secret. By Charlotte M. Braeme, author of "Dora Thorne"	20
440 Mrs. Lirriper's Lodgings. By Charles Dickens.....	10	470 Evelyn's Folly. By Charlotte M. Braeme, author of "Dora Thorne"	20
441 A Sea Change. Flora L. Shaw.	20	471 Thrown on the World. By Charlotte M. Braeme, author of "Dora Thorne"	20
442 Ranthorpe. By George Henry Lewes.....	20	472 The Wise Women of Inverness. By William Black.	10
443 The Bachelor of The Albany...	10	473 A Lost Son. By Mary Linskill.	10
444 The Heart of Jane Warner. By Florence Marryat.....	20	474 Serapis. By George Ebers....	20
445 The Shadow of a Crime. By Hall Caine.....	20	475 The Prima Donna's Husband. By F. Du Boisgobey.....	20
446 Dame Durden. By "Rita"....	20	476 Between Two Sins. By Charlotte M. Braeme, author of "Dora Thorne"	10
447 American Notes. By Charles Dickens.....	20	477 Affinities. A Romance of Today. By Mrs. Campbell Praed.	10
448 Pictures From Italy, and The Mudfog Papers, &c. By Chas. Dickens.....	20	478 Diavola; or, Nobody's Daughter. By Miss M. E. Braddon. Part I.	20
449 Peeress and Player. By Florence Marryat.....	20	478 Diavola; or, Nobody's Daughter. By Miss M. E. Braddon. Part II.	20
450 Godfrey Helstone. By Georgiana M. Craik.....	20	479 Louisa. Katharine S. Macquoid	20
451 Market Harborough, and Inside the Bar. By G. J. Whyte-Melville	20	480 Married in Haste. Edited by Miss M. E. Braddon.....	20
452 In the West Country. By May Crommelin.....	20	481 The House that Jack Built. By Alison	10
453 The Lottery Ticket. By F. Du Boisgobey.....	20	482 A Vagrant Wife. By F. Warden	20
454 The Mystery of Edwin Drood. By Charles Dickens.....	20	483 Betwixt My Love and Me. By the-author of "A Golden Bar"	10
455 Lazarus in London. By F. W. Robinson.....	20	484 Although He Was a Lord, and Other Tales. Mrs. Forrester.	10
456 Sketches by Boz. Illustrative of Every-day Life and Every-day People. By Charles Dickens.	20	485 Tinted Vapours. By J. Maclareen Cobban.....	10
457 The Russians at the Gates of Herat. By Charles Marvin...	10	486 Dick's Sweetheart. By "The Duchess"	20
458 A Week of Passion; or, The Dilemma of Mr. George Barton the Younger. By Edward Jenkins.....	20	487 Put to the Test. Edited by Miss M. E. Braddon.....	20
459 A Woman's Temptation. By Charlotte M. Braeme, author of "Dora Thorne".....	20	488 Joshua Haggard's Daughter. By Miss M. E. Braddon.....	20
460 Under a Shadow. By Charlotte M. Braeme, author of "Dora Thorne".....	20	489 Rupert Godwin. By Miss M. E. Braddon.....	20
461 His Wedded Wife. By author of "Ladybird's Penitence" ..	20	490 A Second Life. Mrs. Alexander	20
462 Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. By Lewis Carroll. With forty-two illustrations by John Tenniel	20	491 Society in London. By A Foreign Resident	10
463 Redgauntlet. Sir Walter Scott.	20	492 Mignon; or, Bootles' Baby. By J. S. Winter. Illustrated.....	10
464 The Newcomes. By Wm. Makepeace Thackeray. Part I.....	20	493 Colonel Enderby's Wife. By Lucas Malet.....	20
464 The Newcomes. By Wm. Makepeace Thackeray. Part II....	20	494 A Maiden All Forlorn, and Barbara. By "The Duchess" ...	10
465 The Earl's Atonement. By Charlotte M. Braeme, author of "Dora Thorne".....	20	495 Mount Royal. By Miss M. E. Braddon.....	20
466 Between Two Loves. By Charlotte M. Braeme, author of "Dora Thorne".....	20	496 Only a Woman. Edited by Miss M. E. Braddon.....	20
467 A Struggle for a Ring. By Charlotte M. Braeme, author of "Dora Thorne".....	20	497 The Lady's Mile. By Miss M. E. Braddon.....	20
		498 Only a Clod. By Miss M. E. Braddon.....	20
		499 The Cloven Foot. By Miss M. E. Braddon.....	20
		500 Adrian Vidal. By W. E. Norris.	20
		501 Mr. Butler's Ward. By F. Mabel Robinson.....	20

THE SEASIDE LIBRARY.—Pocket Edition.

NO.	PRICE.	NO.	PRICE.
502 Carriston's Gift. By Hugh Conway, author of "Called Back"	10	515 Sir Jasper's Tenant. A Novel. By Miss M. E. Braddon.....	20
503 The Tinted Venus. By F. Anstey	10	516 Put Asunder; or, Lady Castlemaine's Divorce. By Charlotte M. Braeme, author of "Dora Thorne".....	20
504 Curly: An Actor's Story. By John Coleman. Illustrated. My Poor Wife. By the author of "Addie's Husband"	10	517 A Passive Crime, and Other Stories. By "The Duchess"	10
505 The Society of London. By Count Paul Vasili	10	518 The Hidden Sin. A Novel.....	20
506 Lady Lovelace. By the author of "Judith Wynne"	20	519 James Gordon's Wife. A Novel.	20
507 Chronicles of the Canongate, and Other Stories. By Sir Walter Scott.....	10	520 She's All the World to Me. By Hall Caine.....	10
508 The Unholy Wish, by Mrs. Henry Wood, and The Girl at the Gate, by Wilkie Collins...	10	521 Entangled. E. Fairfax Byrrne	20
509 Nell Haffenden. By Tighe Hopkins.....	20	522 Zig-Zag, the Clown; or, The Steel Gauntlets. By F. Du Boisgobey.....	20
510 A Mad Love. By the author of "Lover and Lord"	10	525 Paul Vargas, and Other Stories. By Hugh Conway, author of "Called Back"	10
511 A Strange World. By Miss M. E. Braddon.....	20	527 The Days of My Life. By Mrs. Oliphant.....	20
512 The Waters of Hercules.....	20	528 At His Gates. By Mrs. Oliphant	20
513 Helen Whitney's Wedding, and Other Tales. By Mrs. Henry Wood.....	10	532 Arden Court. Barbara Graham.	20
514 The Mystery of Jessy Page, and Other Tales. By Mrs. Henry Wood.....	10	535 Henrietta's Wish. A Tale. By Charlotte M. Yonge.....	10

The foregoing books are for sale by all newsdealers, or will be sent to any address, postage prepaid, by the publisher, on receipt of 12 cents for single numbers, and 25 cents for double numbers. Parties within reach of newsdealers will please get the books through them and thus avoid paying extra for postage. Those wishing the *Pocket Edition* of THE SEASIDE LIBRARY must be careful to mention the Pocket Edition, otherwise the Ordinary Edition will be sent.

GEORGE MUNRO, Publisher,

P. O. Box 3751.

17 to 27 Vandewater Street, N. Y.

THE NEW YORK FASHION BAZAR BOOK OF THE TOILET PRICE 25 CENTS.

THIS IS A LITTLE BOOK WHICH WE CAN RECOMMEND TO EVERY LADY FOR THE

PRESERVATION AND INCREASE OF HEALTH AND BEAUTY.

IT CONTAINS FULL DIRECTIONS FOR ALL THE

ARTS AND MYSTERIES OF PERSONAL DECORATION.

Nothing necessary to a complete toilet book of recipes and valuable advice and information has been overlooked in the compilation of this volume.

For sale by all Newsdealers, or sent to any address on receipt of the price, postage prepaid, by

GEORGE MUNRO, Publisher,

P. O. Box 3751.

17 to 27 Vandewater Street, N. Y.

THE NEW YORK
FASHION BAZAR BOOK OF THE TOILET.

PRICE 25 CENTS.

P. O. Box 3751.

GEORGE MUNRO, Publisher,
17 to 27 Vandewater Street, New York.

THIS IS A LITTLE BOOK
WHICH
WE CAN RECOMMEND TO EVERY LADY
FOR THE
PRESERVATION AND INCREASE OF HEALTH AND BEAUTY.

IT CONTAINS FULL DIRECTIONS FOR ALL THE
ARTS AND MYSTERIES OF PERSONAL DECORATION,
AND FOR
Increasing the Natural Graces of Form and Expression.

ALL THE LITTLE AFFECTIONS OF THE
Skin, Hair, Eyes and Body
THAT DETRACT FROM APPEARANCE AND HAPPINESS
Are Made the Subjects of Precise and Excellent Recipes.
Ladies Are Instructed How to Reduce Their Weight

Without Injury to Health and Without Producing
Pallor and Weakness.

NOTHING NECESSARY TO
A COMPLETE TOILET BOOK OF RECIPES
AND
VALUABLE ADVICE AND INFORMATION
HAS BEEN OVERLOOKED IN THE COMPILATION OF THIS VOLUME.

For sale by all Newsdealers, or sent to any address on receipt of the price,
postage prepaid, by the Publisher.

Old Sleuth Library

A Series of the Most Thrilling Detective Stories Ever Published!

No. 1.—OLD SLEUTH THE DETECTIVE.

A dashing romance, detailing in graphic style the hair-breadth escapes and thrilling adventures of a veteran agent of the law.

No. 2.—THE KING OF THE DETECTIVES.

In this story the shrewdness and cunning of a master mind are delineated in a fascinating manner.

No. 3.—OLD SLEUTH'S TRIUMPH.

IN TWO HALVES—10 CENTS EACH.

The crowning triumph of the great detective's active career is reached after undergoing many exciting perils and dangers.

No. 4.—UNDER A MILLION DISGUISES.

The many subterfuges by which a detective tracks his game to justice are all described in a graphic manner in this great story.

No. 5.—NIGHT SCENES IN NEW YORK.

An absorbing story of life after dark in the great metropolis. All the various features of metropolitan life—the places of amusement, high and low life among night-hawks of Gotham, etc., are realistically described in this delightful story.

No. 6.—OLD ELECTRICITY, THE LIGHTNING DETECTIVE.

For ingenuity of plot, quick and exciting succession of dramatic incidents, this great story has not an equal in the whole range of detective literature.

No. 7.—THE SHADOW DETECTIVE.

IN TWO PARTS—10 CENTS EACH.

This thrilling story is a masterpiece of entrancing fiction. The wonderful exploits and hair-breadth escapes of a clever law-agent are all described in brilliant style.

No. 8.—RED LIGHT WILL, THE RIVER DETECTIVE.

In this splendid romance, lovers of the weird, exciting phases of life on the teeming docks and wharfs of a great city, will find a mine of thrilling interest.

No. 9.—IRON BURGESS, THE GOVERNMENT DETECTIVE.

The many sensational incidents of a detective's life in chasing to cover the sharks who prey upon the revenue of the Government are all described in a fascinating manner. The story will hold the reader spell-bound with interest from beginning to end.

No. 10.—THE BRIGANDS OF NEW YORK.

This work is a startling exposé of the dangers of the great metropolis, and brings to light many hitherto hidden crimes perpetrated by the criminals of the city.

No. 11.—TRACKED BY A VENTRILLOQUIST.

In this story the wonderful art of ventriloquism is made to play a prominent part, and by its aid many a miscarriage of justice is avoided.

No. 12.—THE TWIN DETECTIVES.

Through the wonderful congenital resemblance of the heroes, the scenes and incidents of this story assume a weird effect, and the interest is unabated to the last line.

No. 13.—THE FRENCH DETECTIVE.

Those who are familiar with the work performed by Vidocq, Lecoq, and other eminent French officers, will find this book fully equal to anything written of them.

No. 14.—THE ST. LOUIS DETECTIVE.

A tale of the great South-west, replete with all the stirring incidents peculiar to that section of the country.

The above works are for sale by all newsdealers at 10 cents each, or will be sent to any address, postage paid, on receipt of 12 cents, by the publisher.

GEORGE MUNRO, Publisher,

P. O. Box 3751.

17 to 27 Vandewater Street, N. Y.

JUST ISSUED.

JULIET CORSON'S NEW FAMILY COOK BOOK.

BY MISS JULIET CORSON,

Author of "Meals for the Million," etc., etc.

SUPERINTENDENT OF THE NEW YORK SCHOOL OF COOKERY.

PRICE: HANDSOMELY BOUND IN CLOTH, \$1.00.

A COMPLETE COOK BOOK For Family Use in City and Country.

CONTAINING

PRACTICAL RECIPES AND FULL AND PLAIN DIRECTIONS FOR COOKING ALL DISHES USED IN AMERICAN HOUSEHOLDS.

The Best and Most Economical Methods of Cooking Meats, Fish, Vegetables, Sauces, Salads, Puddings and Pies.

How to Prepare Relishes and Savory Accessories, Picked-up Dishes, Soups, Seasoning, Stuffing and Stews.

How to Make Good Bread, Biscuit, Omelets, Jellies, Jams, Pancakes, Fritters and Fillets.

Miss Corson is the best American writer on cooking. All of her recipes have been carefully tested in the New York School of Cookery. If her directions are carefully followed there will be no failures and no reason for complaint. Her directions are always plain, very complete, and easily followed.

Juliet Corson's New Family Cook Book

Is sold by all newsdealers. It will be sent, postpaid, on receipt of price: handsomely bound in cloth, \$1.00, by

GEORGE MUNRO, Publisher,

(P. O. Box 3751.)

17 to 27 Vandewater St., New York.

THE
New York Fashion Bazar.
THE BEST AMERICAN HOME MAGAZINE.

Price 25 Cents per Copy. Subscription Price \$2.50 per Year.

A HANDSOME chromo will be given free to every yearly subscriber to the NEW YORK MONTHLY FASHION BAZAR whose name will be on our books when the Christmas number is issued. Persons desirous of availing themselves of this elegant present will please forward their subscription as soon as possible.

THE NEW YORK FASHION BAZAR is a magazine for ladies. It contains everything which a lady's magazine ought to contain. The fashions in dress which it publishes are new and reliable. Particular attention is devoted to fashions for children of all ages. Its plates and descriptions will assist every lady in the preparation of her wardrobe, both in making new dresses and remodeling old ones. The fashions are derived from the best houses and are always practical as well as new and tasteful.

Every lady reader of THE NEW YORK FASHION BAZAR can make her own dresses with the aid of Munro's Bazar Patterns. These are carefully cut to measure and pinned into the perfect semblance of the garment. They are useful in altering old as well as in making new clothing.

The Bazar Embroidery Supplements form an important part of the magazine. Fancy work is carefully described and illustrated, and new patterns given in every number.

All household matters are fully and interestingly treated. Home information, decoration, personal gossip, correspondence, and recipes for cooking have each a department.

Among its regular contributors are MARY CECIL HAY, "THE DUCHESS," author of "Molly Bawn," LUCY RANDALL COMFORT, CHARLOTTE M. BRAEME, author of "Dora Thorne," MRS. ALEX. MCVEIGH MILLER, MARY E. BRYAN, author of "Manch," and FLORENCE A. WARDEN, author of "The House on the Marsh."

The stories published in THE NEW YORK FASHION BAZAR are the best that can be had.

We employ no canvassers to solicit subscriptions for THE NEW YORK FASHION BAZAR. All persons representing themselves as such are swindlers.

THE NEW YORK FASHION BAZAR is for sale by all newsdealers, price 25 cents per copy. Subscription price \$2.50 per year. Address

GEORGE MUNRO, Publisher,

P. O. Box 3751.

17 to 27 Vandewater Street, N. Y.

THE CELEBRATED

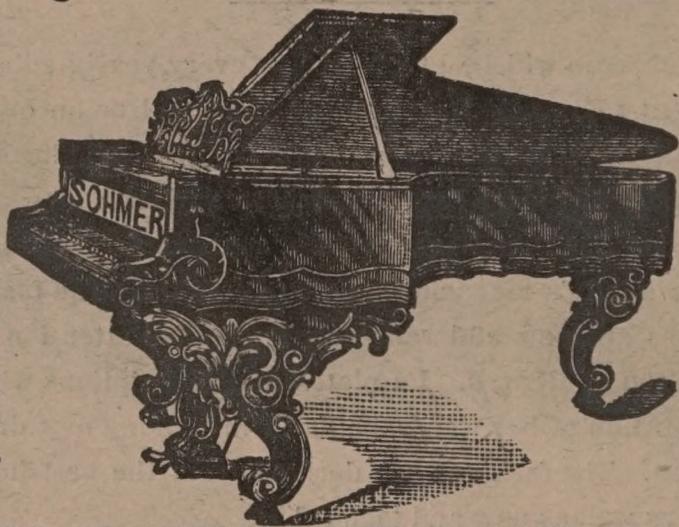
SOHMER

GRAND, SQUARE AND UPRIGHT PIANOS.

FIRST PRIZE
DIPLOMA.

Centennial Exhibition, 1876; Montreal, 1881 and 1882.

The enviable position Sohmer & Co. hold among American Piano Manufacturers is solely due to the merits of their instruments.



ARE AT PRESENT THE MOST POPULAR
AND PREFERRED BY THE LEADING ARTISTS.
SOHMER & CO., Manufacturers, No. 149 to 155 E. 14th Street, N. Y.



FROM THE
NERVE-GIVING
PRINCIPLES OF
THE OX-BRAIN
AND THE GERM
OF THE WHEAT
AND OAT.

BRAIN AND NERVE FOOD.

CROSBY'S

VITALIZED PHOSPHITES

Is a standard with all Physicians who treat nervous or mental disorders. It builds up worn-out nerves, banishes sleeplessness, neuralgia and sick headache. It promotes good digestion. It restores the energy lost by nervousness, debility, or over-exhaustion; regenerates weakened vital powers.

"It amplifies bodily and mental power to the present generation, and proves the survival of the fittest to the next."—BISMARCK.

"It strengthens nervous power. It is the only medical relief I have ever known for an over-worked brain."—GLADSTONE.

"I really urge you to put it to the test."—MISS EMILY FAITHFUL.

F. CROSBY CO., 56 W. 25th St., N. Y.
For sale by Druggists, or by mail \$1.

They are used in Conservatories, Schools and Seminaries, on account of their superior tone and unequalled durability.

The SOHMER Piano is a special favorite with the leading musicians and critics.

MUNRO'S PUBLICATIONS.

THE SEASIDE LIBRARY

CLOTH EDITION.

HANSOMELY BOUND.

CHARLES DICKENS' WORKS.

Martin Chuzzlewit.....	50c
David Copperfield.....	50c
Dombey and Son.....	50c
Nicholas Nickleby.....	50c
Pickwick Papers.....	50c
Bleak House.....	50c
Our Mutual Friend.....	50c

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. Extra-large type. By Lewis Carroll. With forty-two illustrations by John Tenniel.... 50c

Any of the above works will be sent by mail, postpaid, on receipt of the price. Address

GEORGE MUNRO, Publisher,

17 to 27 Vandewater St., New York.
P. O. Box 3751.





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00022787573

